TV GAMER

THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO CASSETTE AND CARTRIDGE GAMES

JANUARY 1985 85p

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

DRAGONRIDERS OF PERN
New games from top sci-fi cult

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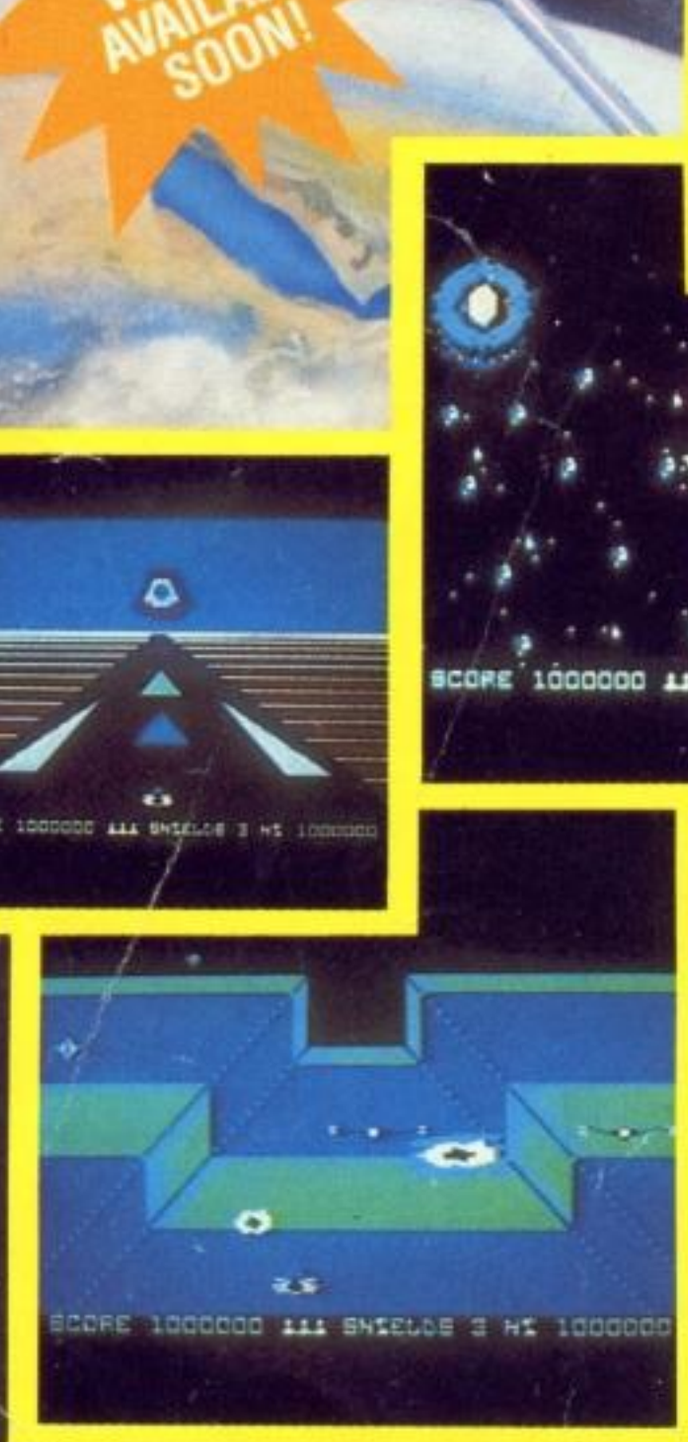

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M·E·N·U

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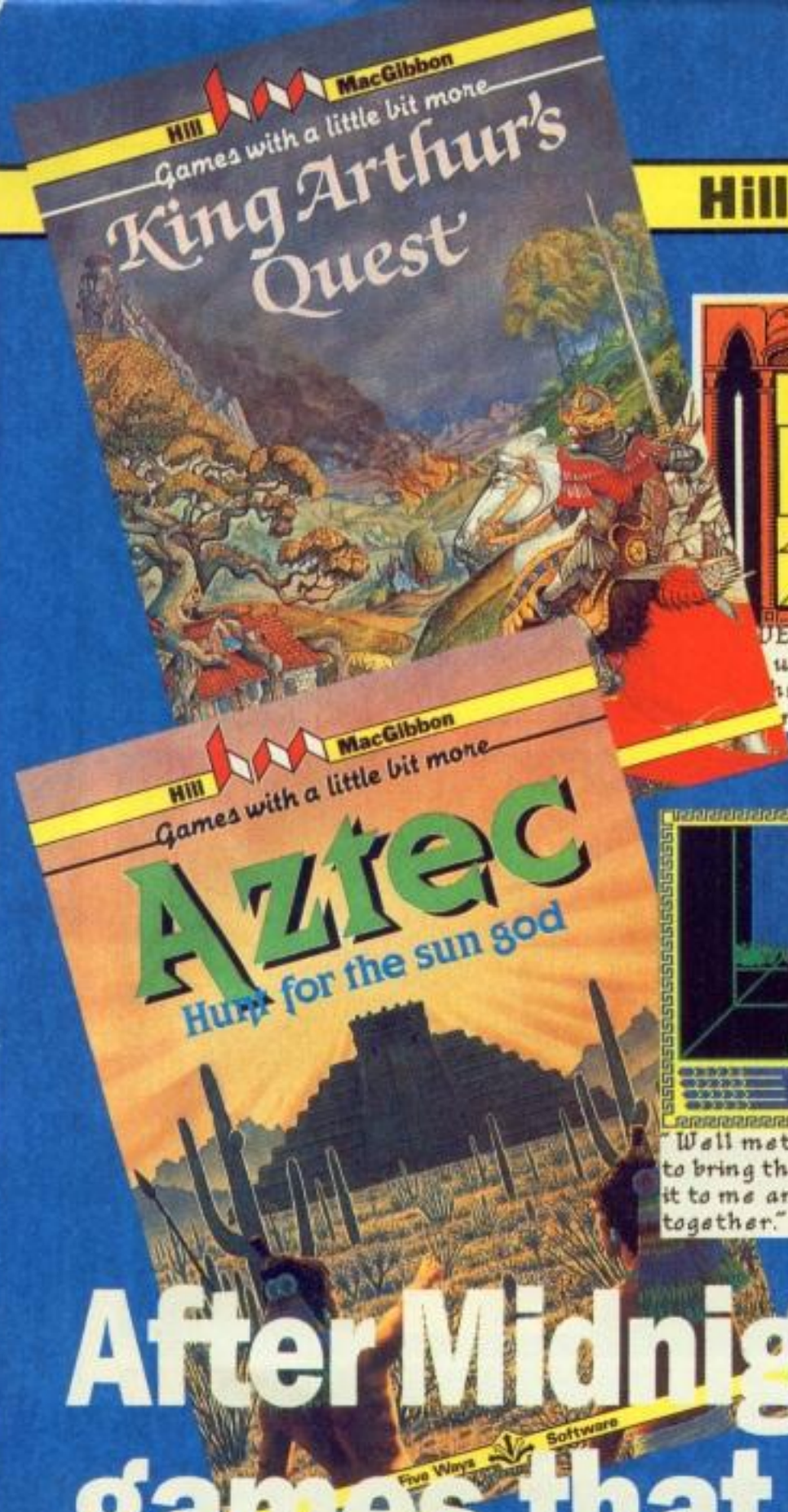
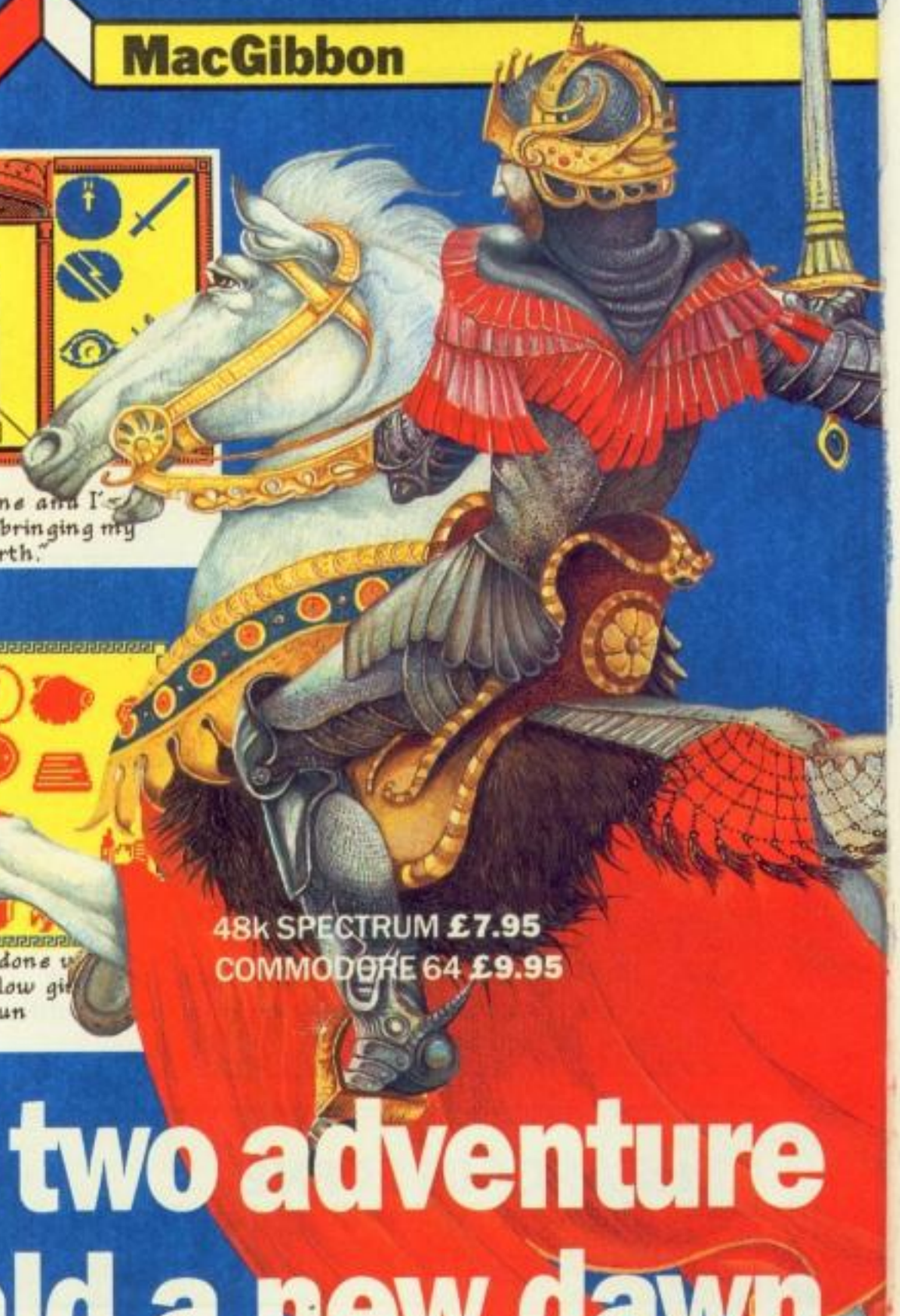
Hill MacGibbon





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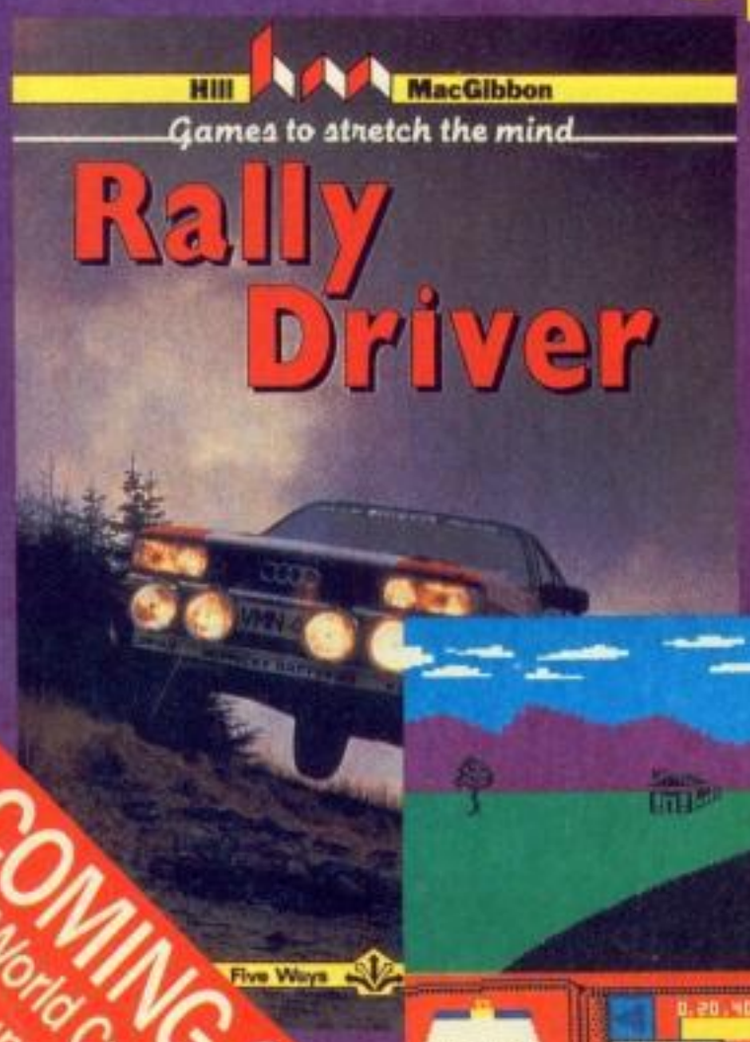

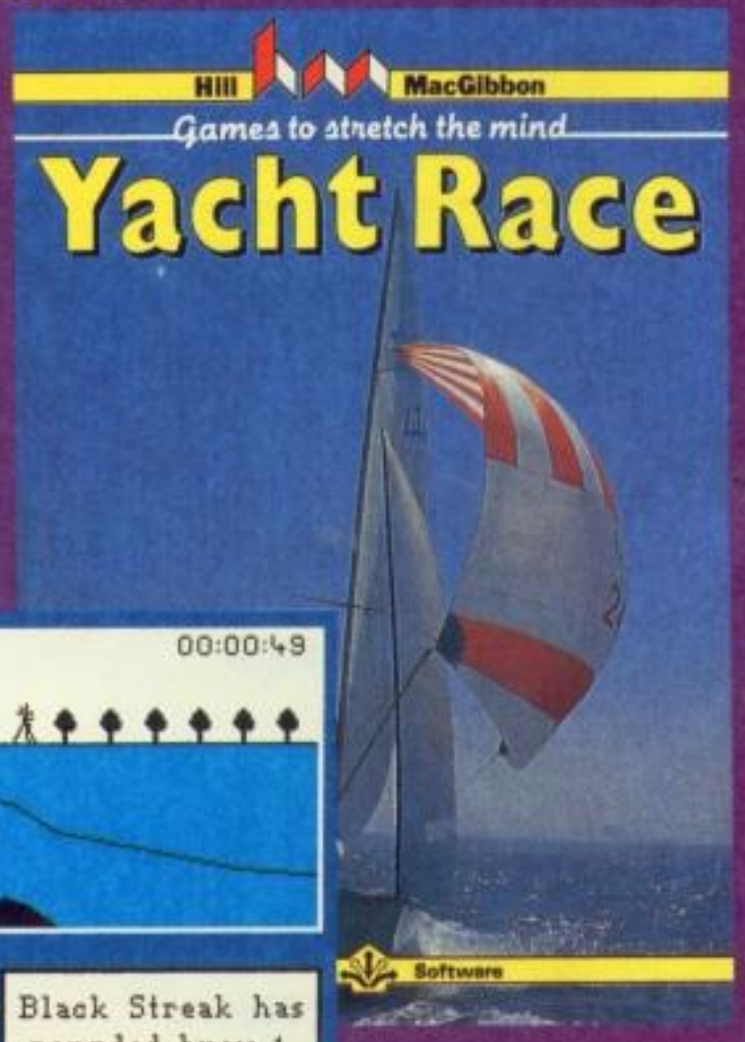

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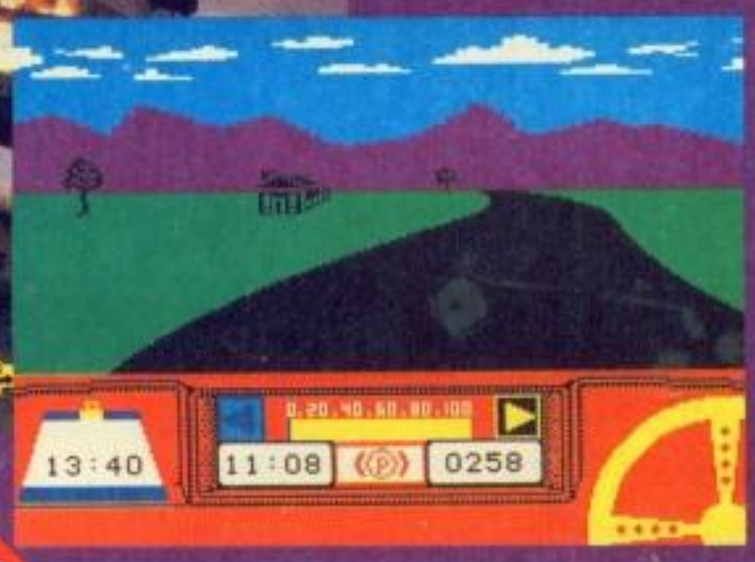

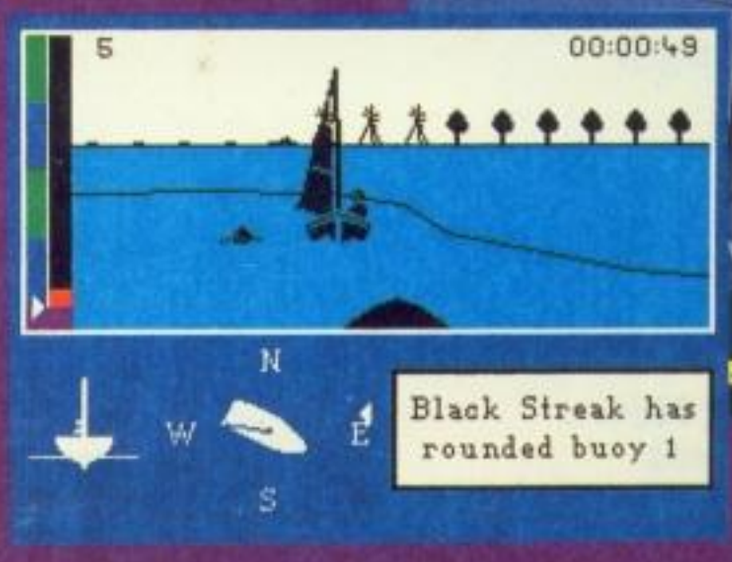

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EDITOR ONLINE

We'd like to wish a happy and prosperous 1985 to all *TV Gamer*'s readers. We hope that you're bearing up under the yuletide season – and that our Christmas Buyer's Guide in the last issue helped you get exactly what you wanted.

We've started off the new year with a 'media' flavour. The cover story is *The Dragonriders Of Pern* for the Commodore 64. This is based on Hugo and Nebula award winner Anne McCaffrey's science fiction novels – fifteen million have been sold. Fans have been waiting over a year, since the news was announced, for this interactive game version.

Frederick Forsyth, too, is getting in on the act. Worldwide sales of his books exceed 30 million. Now his latest novel, *The Fourth Protocol*, will appear in Spring as a game on the Spectrum and CBM64.

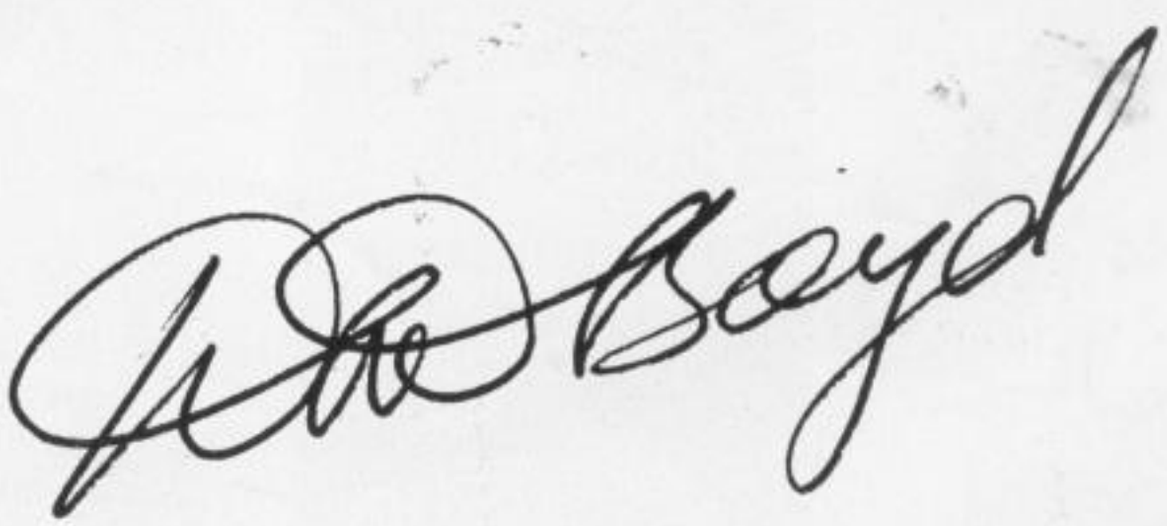
Another media – film – is covered in an article on *The Last Starfighter*. As mentioned in our last issue, this film about the ultimate arcade game is in turn partly computer controlled. The Cray X-MP created 230 special effects scenes.

As usual, *TV Gamer* is running a great competition to win the micro of the month. This time, it's the Memotech MTX 512, an unsung hero which hasn't got the publicity it deserves. Post your entries in the same envelope as your Arcade Of The Year nominations.

Our indepth reviews include *Return To Eden*, the sequel to the successful *Snowball* adventure. It should be just as big a hit as the first, and has the bonus of running on six of the most popular micros. There's also details of how to get through the arcade versions of *Tron* and *Discs of Tron*, and Alligata's *Rocket Roger* platform game.

One new feature is a series on synthesisers. It's amazing how easy it is to understand how the top music groups use them – and how your micro can recreate those sounds with one.

Do keep writing in to say what you would like to see in the magazine. That way, you can be sure you'll read what you want.



Mind Games moves into Broad Street

Software house Mind Games' first game to be released in 1985 is based on Paul McCartney's film, *Give My Regards To Broad Street*. Costing £6.95, it will run on the Commodore 64 and Atari 800 XL.

The film is a multi-million musical extravaganza containing fourteen McCartney songs. It stars McCartney, wife Linda, and ex-Beatle Ringo Starr with his wife Barbara Bach. The storyline revolves around a master tape of songs which suddenly goes missing.

The game also boasts of being a "real scouse" production. The music, game design, graphics and coding all involve Liverpudlians. Apparently, McCartney is a keen games player, and is contributing a good deal to the development. And the final product will be tested by his family.

The game will be released at the same time as the film. Let's hope that it deserves more critical success than the film received.

Doomdark's Revenge is here. The sequel to the successful *Lords Of Midnight* (TVG, August 1984) sees Doomdark's daughter, Shareth the heartstealer, ensnare Morkin, Luxor's son. Luxor and his old ally, Rorthron, ride to the rescue.

The new game is larger than the original, with 48,000 screens. 123 independent lords help command the five races of giants, dwarves, fey, icelords and barbarians. Each has his own liege, hatreds, and personality.

Doomdark's Revenge is by Mike Singleton, and comes from Beyond Software.

It is available on the Spectrum, at £9.95. And CBM 64 owners should see a version for them soon.

Spy Vs Spy (TVG, August) is Beyond's first game to be released in 1985.

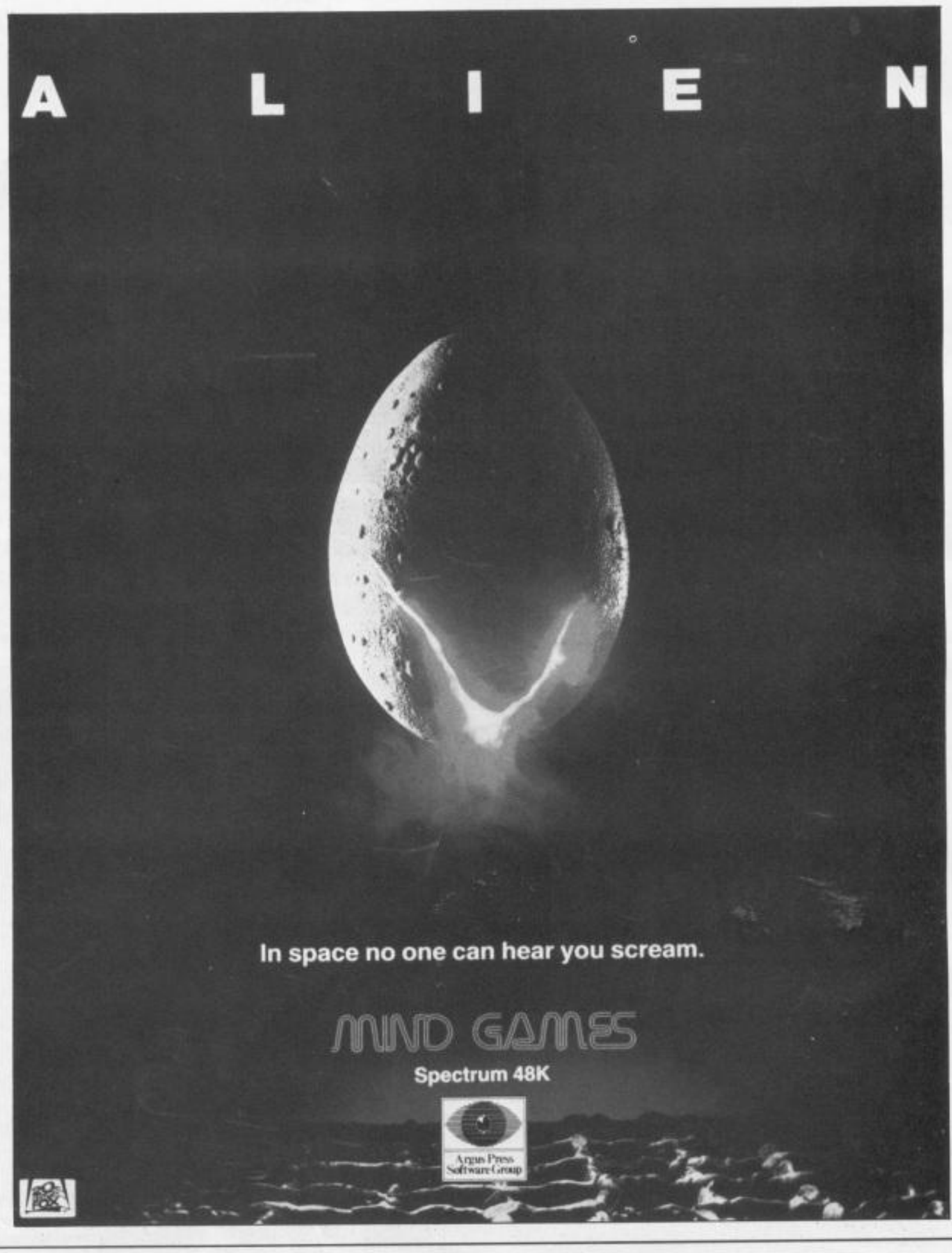
It's an animated cartoon adventure based on *Mad* magazine's opposing black spy and white spy characters. The two cunning secret agents try to uncover a set of secret plans hidden in a foreign embassy. The mission must be accomplished at any cost.

Spy Vs Spy has been licenced by Beyond from First Star.

In space, no one can hear you scream. The phrase is familiar to all those who saw the film *Alien*. The game of the film is from Mind Games, and runs on the CBM 64 and Spectrum. Costing £8.99, it comes with a sixteen-page guide to play, with film stills of the story so far.

Four million accesses in one month! TVG's Micronet news page has been getting more popular every month.

Now Micronet boasts double the accesses of any other information provider. The most active area was Chatline. This service allows Micronetters to 'converse' by sending short messages through their computer to Micronet and on to other users.



Twenty-six MSX games for £5.95? It's not impossible, Melbourne House says, if you manage to get your hands on its *MSX Games Book*. The programs cover educational, simulation, adventure and arcade games. A screen shot of each is shown. And, of course, the ChexSum program is included. This enables you to find any programming errors quickly.

The building societies are after you. Nationwide Building Society is wooing young investors with £3 tokens which can be used to buy any Sinclair software at branches of WH Smith. The offer is open until the end of March, or until stocks are exhausted. The catch? You've got to save £25 with Nationwide first.

Official: Coleco is going. As we reported in the July 1984 issue of TVG, Coleco promised to supply any interested customers with Colecovision dedicated video systems until the end of the year. That year is now up.

The cheapest MSX may be that from Gold Star. It's a 64K micro priced at £239.99, and distributed by Micro Dealer. As TVG went to press, the company said it hoped to sell 10,000 in the Christmas period. (For more details on MSX micros, see TVG, November 1984.)

Delightful dozen from Ariolasoft. The famous US record company is taking on the computer games market in a big way. It launched twelve *Billboard Top Ten* hits in its initial range. Six are from Broderbund Software, and six from Electronic Arts. All the games have appeared in the UK before, but as expensive imports. In new packaging, they are now competitively priced between £7 and £9. Titles include *Choplifter*, *MULE*, *Lode Runner*, *Operation Whirlwind*, and *One on One*.

New year's resolution: get organised. If you're still stuck for a last-minute Christmas present, how about getting a little organisation into someong's life with the Psion Organiser. It's a multi-function calculator which allows you to store up to 32K of immediately accessible information. So you need never again forget a name, address, telephone number, birthday, train time... For details, contact Psion on 01-200 0200.

Now adventure game players can beat the system – fast. Print 'N' Plotter has brought out a fifty-page planning pad which lets you plan, preplan, and record your adventure. Each of the pages contains a 'mapping' system with over 150 locations, and comes with examples, hints and tips. You can buy it for £3.95 in the shops, or directly from Print 'N' Plotter for £4.50. Telephone on 01-403 3622.

Wally's gone glamorous – or rather, he's gone for the glamorous world of motor racing sponsorship. The star of software house Mikro-Gen's *Automania* and *Pyjamarama* games has been a hit at the Belgium Mandes and Glosso championships, Brands Hatch Grand Prix, and the Lydden Hill championship. The motto: "Watch out, there's a Wally about".

Compec, for those of you who are not familiar with it, is a large computer fair aimed at the computer trade and at the manufacturers of the more expensive minicomputers. Despite this slant, there were some items at the show to interest TV Gamer readers.

Most interesting was the Acorn stand. As usual, it was one of the larger stands at the show. As well as showing off the Beeb, the Electron, and the newly released ABC (Acorn Business Computer), Acorn also had accessories for both the BBC and the Electron.

For the BBC's second processor series, the 32016 was launched. This provides the user with 256K of Ram, and a variety of industry-standard programming languages for the education and scientific markets which allowed mainframe computer programs to be run on the humble BBC.

Also on show was Acorn's video disc attachment. This plugs into the computer and allows it to operate the disc. Although this piece of hardware is pitched at the computer-aided training market rather than the games market, there is no reason why games will not follow sometime in the near future.

Certainly the noisiest hardware on the Acorn stand was the Music 500 system. It plugs into the 1MHz bus and converts your BBC into a synthesiser of sorts. Music 500 consists of two disc drive-shaped boxes. One contained the additional sound chips, and the other allowed the audio output of the grossly inadequate internal loudspeaker to be switched into a better amplification – such as a ghetto blaster.

The third piece of hardware is a proper, full-size piano-style keyboard. This is not an essential piece of hardware if you are just after weird sound effects, as everything is accessible from the QWERTY keyboard if preferred.

Music 500 costs £199, plus an additional £199 for the musician-style keyboard. Future software includes a sampler. This type of program is very similar to what the Fairlight computer does. For those of you who don't know what a sampler is: it takes a sound, works out what makes up that sound, and simulates it using its custom chips.

For instance, you could theoretically "record" a sound into memory, and reproduce it over the entire octave range of the keyboard. Many top pop groups are into this – including Yazoo and Depeche Mode. So this might mean sophisticated sounds are in the reach of us micro-owning mortals.

Electron users won't be treated to those particular delights. But they are catered for after a lapse. In addition to the launch of a restyled datasette, Acorn has launched the Plus Three. This is the sequel to the Plus One and Plus Two. It's a disc drive expansion system which allows the use of three-inch discs. All these should be in the shops by the time you read this news item.

TV GAMER COMPETITIONS

For those of you who haven't kept up to date with the winners of our competitions in the last few months, here's a rundown. All winners were notified by post immediately the results were known.

June 1984: Win an Oric Atmos computer. TVG readers had to write the caption to a cartoon. The winner was Anthony Mountford of RAF Cosford. His caption was "You really know you're somebody when a computer software company reserves your parking space".

July 1984: Win a complete Vic-20 starter pack! Readers had to fill in the balloons in a cartoon caption. The winner was M Mascarenhas of East Finchley, London (Maggie Thatcher's territory). The caption was "Doctor: You've got a cold bug – rub this Vic-20 twice daily on your chest". "Gamepaws: This is the 3.5 kilobyte question – will it affect my peripherals?"

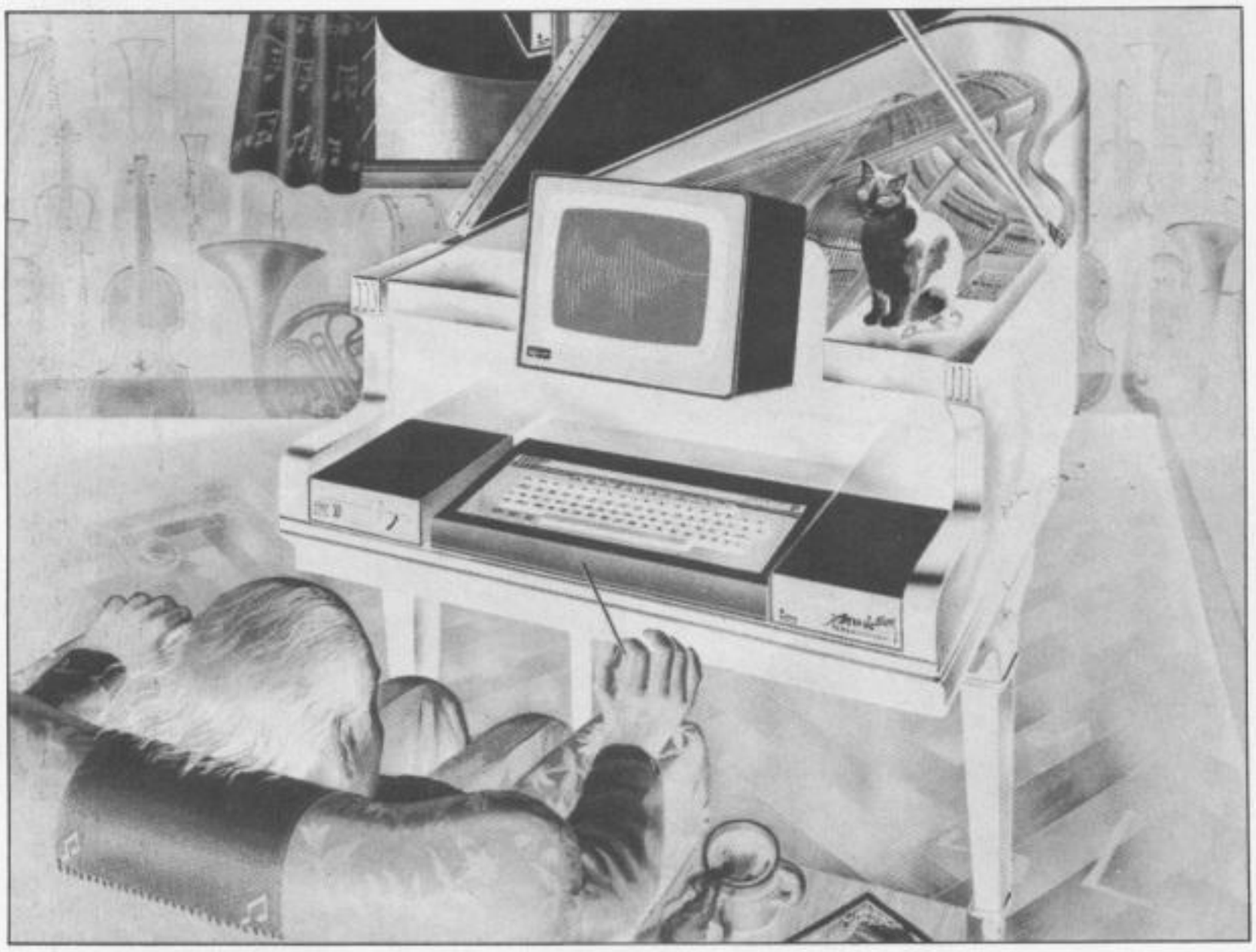
August 1984: Win a TV monitor, or share £1,000s' worth of games from Voyager Software as runner-up prizes. This competition is still to be judged by Voyager – see next month's issue.

September 1984: Competition for an Adam computer. TVG readers had to correct a mistyped game review. The winner was Chris Short of Tewkesbury. His entry showed thirty-two errors, and ran as follows. "Once loaded, we are treated to a colourful display of black and white, block graphics. While waiting for the game to start, the sucker (sorry, player) is presented with a rendering of the 1812 Overture played in one note. Next comes a high pitched scream designed to wake the sleeping player. To enhance the game playability, you are provided with a FREE Super-action total control joystick at an extra cost of £219 (+ £10 p+p). Without it, the game is unplayable. Once I picked up the joystick I never put it down. . . rigamortis had set in!"

October 1984: Win a Commodore 64 computer. The winner was Ms Carol Brayshaw of Waltham Abbey, Essex. Her tie-breaker was "The most useful accessory for a games player is a disc drive, as it provides fast access to a favourite game, and has the advantage of a greater storage capacity".

Plus: Fifty copies of the Chris Tarrant videotape. All you had to do was write a caption to a zany picture of Christ Tarrant. Free videotapes have already been sent to all the lucky winners.

There's a free competition in every issue of TV Gamer. It could be your turn to win next month!



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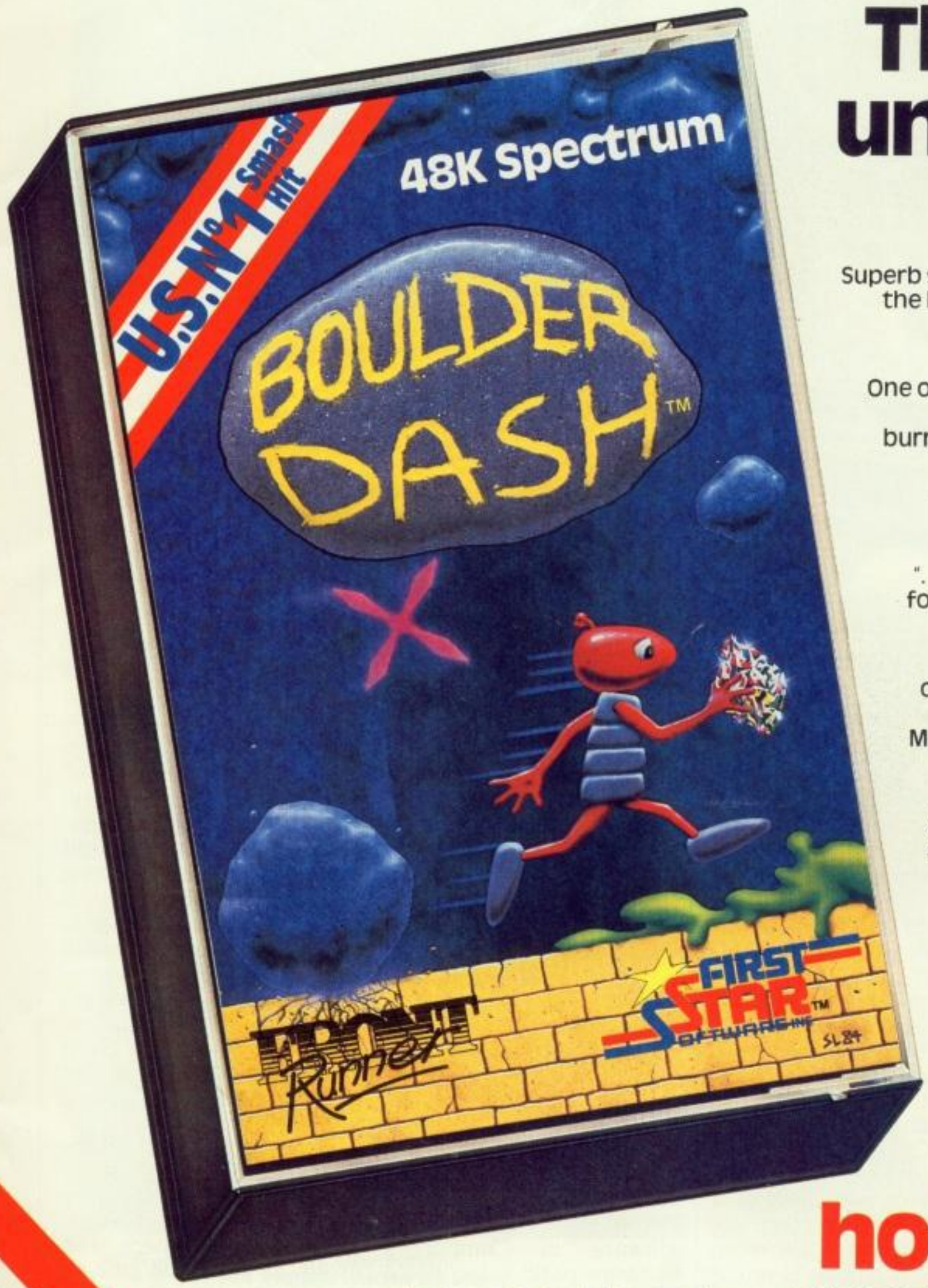

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U.S. Reviews

"... Boulder Dash should be leading contender for anybody's action-game-of-the-year award."
Burt Hochberg **GAMES Magazine**

"... a magical mix of challenge, charm and originality ... easily one of the best computer games of the year."
Michael Blanchet **Chicago Tribune Syndicate**

"This game will be mentioned in my will ... what sillicon is and integrated circuits were always meant to be ... subtle brilliance and unceasing magic ... in a class by itself ..."
Craig Holyoak **Deseret News**

"First Star has done a first-rate job on BOULDER DASH ... the graphics are dazzling ..."
The Video Game Update

"BOULDER DASH takes the cake ... the overall quality is excellent ..."
John Skoog **K-Power Magazine**

This one's hot for Xmas!

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COMPUNET

You're at home on a wet Sunday afternoon. All your computer games have lost their thrill, you've bettered your best score and zapped the millionth alien. Withdrawal symptons are setting in. John Clarke of Compunet has a solution.

Does the problem sound familiar? The answer may lie with the new communications modem from Commodore. CBM 64 owners need no longer be solitary and softwareless on a Sunday.

The £99.99 modem is a neat black box which plugs in your CBM 64's cartridge port. At the end of a few feet of lead emerging from the box is a standard BT phone plug. Stick it in the socket, and you can soon be 'online' to a new software source. You can also hook up to your friend's computer, to transfer programs or to chat.

Best of all are the information, telesoftware and shopping service networks now available nationally, often for just the cost of a local call.

There's Prestel's Micronet – and a new service specially for CBM 64 owners, called Compunet.

A year's free subscription to Compunet comes with the Commodore modem. This also links to Prestel with the software you get through Compunet. The user-user communications software is also free. There's no charge for being connected to Compunet, other than your phone call, in evenings and all weekend.

Dial the nearest Compunet access point. There are twelve countrywide, so it is only a local call for most people. Then you log on using your personal user number and password.

Once logged in, you find your way around by selecting commands from a menu which scrolls across the bottom of the screen when you hit the cursor keys. Pressing Return selects the highlighted command in the centre. Compunet calls this a 'duckshoot' menu, for obvious reasons.

You can display a directory showing information and/or software. Each entry will usually lead you to another, more detailed directory on the subject. It's like following the branches of a tree.

Select the item you want with the vertical cursor key. You can look at it if it's text, using the command Show. Or you can download it if it's a free program using Buy. If there's a charge for the program, this is shown onscreen. You're asked again if you're sure you want to buy it. So you can't spend money by accident.

The program is sent down the phone line to your computer, where you can save it on disc or tape. Special communications software exclusive to Compunet ensures that poor phone lines don't damage your program. The cost of any software is added to your account on Compunet. About once every three months, Compunet settles up with you by way of a direct debit on your bank account. You can check details of what you've spent at any time online.

A unique feature of Compunet is that you can sell or exchange your own software. You can upload as well as download. Material you upload, which can be text or programs, is immediately available for other users to download. The section on Compunet where you do this is called the 'jungle'. It's like a giant multi-user noticeboard.

You get shop-quality software in Compunet's 'software park', educational software in the 'study', and user software in the 'jungle'. So there's plenty to choose from, much of it free or cheaper than in the shops.

You can communicate with others, advertise or start a club in the jungle. You can also send private messages, using Compunet's courier mailbox service.

Compunet also offers multi-user games. The first of those is *MUD* – multi-user *Dungeons*, developed at Essex university. It's a fascinating game. Addicts are often up all night playing. You can eventually become a wizard, if you're good at it, and have great powers over your fellow players. Century Publications, which offers the game on Compunet, also has a *Good MUD Guide* to find out more and follow the state of play.

Coming soon on Compunet is a gigantic shopping catalogue of over 10,000 items. You can browse through these, and order at attractive prices. And later in 1985 there'll be home banking, and many more services.

Compunet's claim is "You get more from your 64". At £99.99, it looks like being one of the best value peripherals you can buy for your computer.

The modem is available through larger computer retailers, or by mail order if you order direct from Commodore.

If you would like more information, just telephone Compunet on 01-637 0942.

Interview

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This is your big chance – the top programmer's job. All you have to do is be at the right place at the right time.

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Commodore 64

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Rush me_____Tape(s)_____Disk(s) of Interview

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I would like to hear news of more Front Runner releases ☐ Yes

Please allow 21 days for delivery.

FRONT Runner

Meet the Challenge

TV GAMER ARCADE OF THE YEAR, 1984

TV Gamer gives you the chance to nominate your favourite arcade, to give it the kudos it deserves.

The arcade winner of this award will receive a TV Gamer plaque to put up in full view of its gamers.

Just nominate the arcade you think has the best atmosphere, selection of games, and most reasonable prices. The arcade with the most votes gets the award. And the readers who have nominated the winner each get two games for their micro. You can save postage by posting your nomination in the same envelope as your competition entry.

If there happens to be a tie, any additional bonus features that you mention which make the arcade stand out from the rest will be the deciding factor.

RULES

1 All nominations received by the closing date, 31st January 1985, will be examined and judged by the editor.

2 Only nominations submitted with the entry form, cut from this issue of TV Gamer, will be accepted (photocopies ineligible).

3 The readers who nominate the Arcade Of The Year will be advised by post, and details will be published in a forthcoming issue of TV Gamer.

4 In the event of a tie, the arcade with the best bonus features, in the opinion of the editor, will win.

5 The editor's decision is final.

Post this entry to:
Arcade Of The Year, TV Gamer, 187 Oxford Street, London W1R 1AJ

I nominate the following arcade to be Arcade Of The Year:

Name of arcade .....

Name or arcade owner .....

Address of arcade .....

Reasons for nomination .....

Bonus features .....

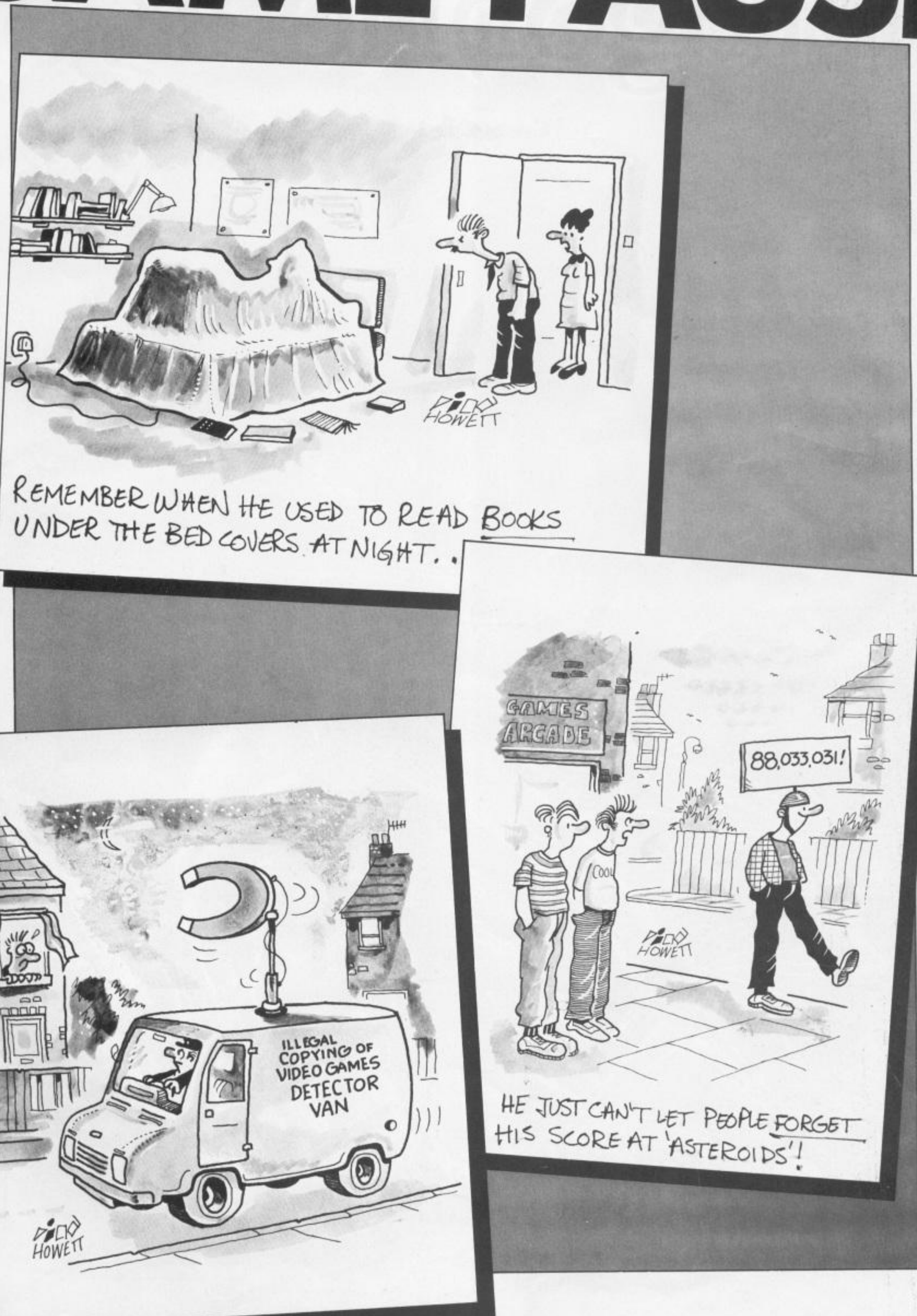
SIGNED .....

Address .....

Micro owned .....

Game preference: (tick your choice) ☐ **adventure** ☐ **shoot 'em up** ☐ **platform** ☐ **miscellaneous**

GAME PAUSE


REMEMBER WHEN HE USED TO READ BOOKS UNDER THE BED COVERS AT NIGHT..
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Dragonriders of

f Pern

Fifteen million books about the planet Pern and its telepathic dragons have been sold worldwide. Now Epyx has released their adventures on the Commodore 64. Deirdre Boyd gives the background to the Dragons of Pern.

The many millions of readers of Ann McCaffrey's novels about Pern and its dragons won't need much explanation about the game translation on the CBM 64. It stays true to the spirit of the original novels – the reason Hugo and Nebula award winner McCaffrey gave Epyx the licence to use her characters. The game has just been released in the UK, and is distributed here by London-based CBS Software.

The Dragonriders Of Pern was the first book in a series which is still continuing, and has given its name to the Epyx game. For those who haven't read the books, the story centres on the planet of Pern. This orbits Rukbat, a golden G–type star. Unfortunately, so does a deadly stray planet caught in Rukbat's atmosphere.

This planet is called the Red Star. Spore life proliferates on its cold, wild surface at an incredible rate. Every 200 years or so, the Red Star's orbit brings it in range of Pern. Then the spore falls as silver thread onto the more hospitable, temperate planet – devouring everything organic in its way.

The first time this happened, the Pernese colonists were unprepared. They suffered staggering losses, and crops and vegetation were wiped out. Only fire could kill thread. Only stone and metal stopped its progress. It did drown in water – but the colonists couldn't survive on the seas.

Worse, as soon as the thread hit the ground, it established burrows from which to send more voracious threads.

Gradually, the survivors made their way to caves in the northern continent. And they bred highly specialised dragons. These flying dragons could chew phosphine – bearing rock, to emit a flaming gas. This charred the thread to ash in mid-air. The dragons were also telepathic between themselves – and with certain people.

Dragon eggs were carefully watched and guarded until the exact moment of hatching. Then, if the right person was near, a dragon would have an immediate telepathic response; this was known as impressing. The two would be inseparable companions and compatriots for life. And only that person could train and use and train that dragon.

The dragonriders, as they were called, could intercept the thread, so saving Pern. They live in large cavernous homes, called weyrs. Gradually six weyrs were set up to protect the whole planet.

The dragonriders were too busy to support themselves in any other way. So the ordinary population supplied them with what they needed, in return for protection.

"But mankind has a history of forgettting the unpleasant, the undesirable," McCaffrey noted. "By ignoring its existence, it can make the source of past terror disappear." The next time the Red Star came in Pern's range, the two were separated by another planet. No thread fell. People forgot about it. They grew crops, and developed crafts. Then they gradually forgot the dragonriders' heroic deeds.

When the Red Star finally returned to Pern – with nothing to separate them – only one man, F'lar, foresaw the danger. He determined to use the last golden egg of a dying dragon queen. So he searched, and found, someone to impress the egg: Lessa. F'lar and Lessa gained control of their weyr. But it was obvious that they didn't have enough dragons or riders to defend the planet.

Then Lessa discovered that dragons could fly 'between'. They could teleport themselves between one place and another – and through time. Lessa flew between to persuade the warriors of long ago to come forward in time and help her. Between them, they saved Pern.

The Dragonriders Of Pern starts seven years later. The deadly silver thread is back, and Pern needs you desperately. Your task is no easier this time than it was for F'lar and Lessa.

In fact, your task is probably more difficult. *The Dragonriders Of Pern* does include arcade-action thread fighting. But it's basically a game of strategy and intrigue. You don't need to have read Ann McCaffrey's books, but they can give clues to the characters' reactions.

There is much political infighting on Pern. As weyrleader of Bendon, you must assure the people you can effectively battle the thread. You will negotiate with the sixteen main lord holders and craftmasters, and invite prospective allies to weddings or hatchings. The more alliances you make, and the less thread you let get by, the stronger you become.

When you load the game, the screen gives you a choice of players. There are six weyrleaders, at least two of which are controlled by the computer. You can choose from one to four manually controlled weyrs, or players. The computer controls the rest.

You can also choose whether to play the strategy game only, the arcade thread fighting section only, or the standard game with a mixture of the two. If you choose the arcade action, you can get plenty of practice in to play the standard game later. It's worth doing, as you can get almost perfect scores.

You can also choose to play the game in seven different speeds, depending on how proficient you are. And you can choose up to three depths of threadfall: fore-, mid- and back-ground.

Finally, time is determined by 'turns'. Each turn equals a year, which in Pern lasts 240 days. You can play from one to ninety-nine turns. But, just so you don't get too confident, the computer may alter the number of turns by one or two.

Play is by keyboard for the strategy part of *Dragonriders*. Use a joystick in port two for the thread fighting.

You can obtain descriptions of the characters in the game, negotiate individually, attempt alliances, issue invitations to weddings and hatchings, hold dragonrider and lord-holder conclaves, and duel.

Before deciding your course of action, check the description of the person you will be dealing with. This will guide you as what attitude to take: pleading, conciliatory, amiable, forceful or threatening.

The bottom half of the menu screen gives you a brief status report. You are with Benden weyr, if playing a single-player game. Beside this is the day of the year, or turn, you are at. Underneath is the number of dragons in your weyr, and the number wounded. Under this again your three staunchest allies are given, and whether there are any holds eligible for weddings.

Dragonriders of Pern™

COVER STORY

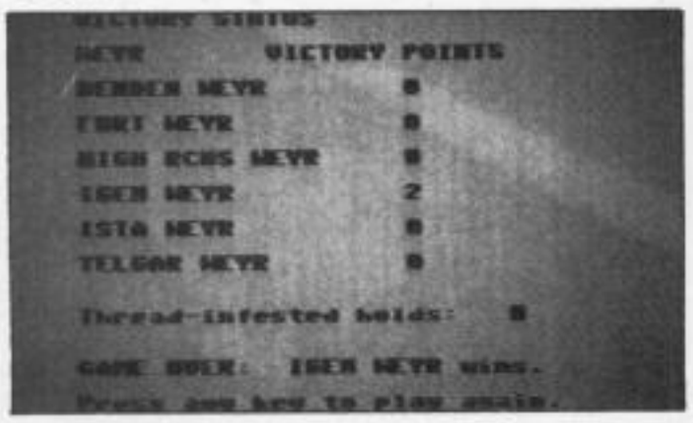
Thread is falling – Send dragons to char it.

The menu with eight choices of action.

The major holds, craft halls and weyrs. You can duel only with weyrs.

Ask the masterharper to attend negotiations with you.

Above: the arcade thread fighting section.



The final results – my efforts were to no avail.

Once you have decided what action to take, the screen changes to show all the holds and craft halls – a hold is where the ordinary people live. If there is a coloured symbol beside any, they are allied to the weyr of that colour. You can still attempt to woo them to your side, but success is rare.

When you have chosen your action, and with whom to deal, the screen again changes. Now you have a 'calendar' of events. You will see on what day the results of your action will come to a head. The computer is busy, too. It decides what action the other weyrs are making. You can see this onscreen, and the results, just as though there were other players in the game. You can't make any more moves until the day for your results arrives, just as though you were continually involved in that action. This can be frustrating at times.

From time to time, a map flashes onscreen. This shows the holds where thread is falling, and where it is heading. You are asked if you will help by sending dragons. It is important here to protect your allies, to keep them.

You will also find the masterharper a powerful ally. But be careful when you duel – you may alienate some of your other allies.

At the end of each turn, thread will fall. Plug your joystick into port two, for this is the arcade section. You control a dragon which breathes fire. Press the fire button, and it will char the thread in mid-air. If you do happen to be hit by thread, press the space bar quickly. The dragon will fly 'between', cooling his wounds, and return in another place to resume the fight. If you don't fly between, the dragon will die.

After each thread fight, the screen lists each weyrleader, the number of dragons killed or wounded, and the number of thread that has successfully burrowed into the soil...and attacking each hold in Pern.

The game ends when twenty or more holds are thread infested, when you receive twenty victory points, or when your time is up.

Corgi publishes the dragonriders' saga, if you want to learn more. Starting with *Dragonflight*, the series includes *Dragonquest*, *The White Dragon*, *Dragonsong*, *Dragonsinger* and *Dragondrums*. The most recent book is *Moreta, Dragonlady Of Pern*, and it is on this that the next Epyx game will be based. To be released later this year, it will contain more graphics than this original game. It tells of a plague on Pern which affects humans and all animals except dragons. And thread falls at this critical time. "It's a story of heroism and sacrifice," McCaffrey said. □

THE MAKING OF

THE LAST STARFIGHTER

Darrin Williamson reports on the making of *The Last Starfighter* – a remarkable film which used a computer for all its effects.

The Last Starfighter was released in December, just in time for the Christmas holidays. It is remarkable because its special effects are created not by the conventional "bluescreen" methods – but by computer.

The bluescreen method uses miniature models and matte paintings superimposed with a neutral colour, usually bright blue. Although this works well, it is limiting, and tell-tale blue fringing occurs even today.

It would be far better to simulate each special effect all at once, using the ultra high-res graphics of a very big computer. Ten years ago, this would have been impossible. Today it is a reality, thanks to the Cray X-MP supercomputer.

The first – of many – motion pictures to use the technology is Heron Films' *The Last Starfighter* (see review in TVG, December). This features twenty-one minutes of pure computer graphics: 230 individual scenes.

The marvellous realistic simulations of Alex's *Gunstar*, Centari's *Star Car* and, of course, the battle scenes, were the creation of Los Angeles-based Digital Productions. The company's co-founders, presi-

Digital scene simulations by Digital Productions, Los Angeles, CA.
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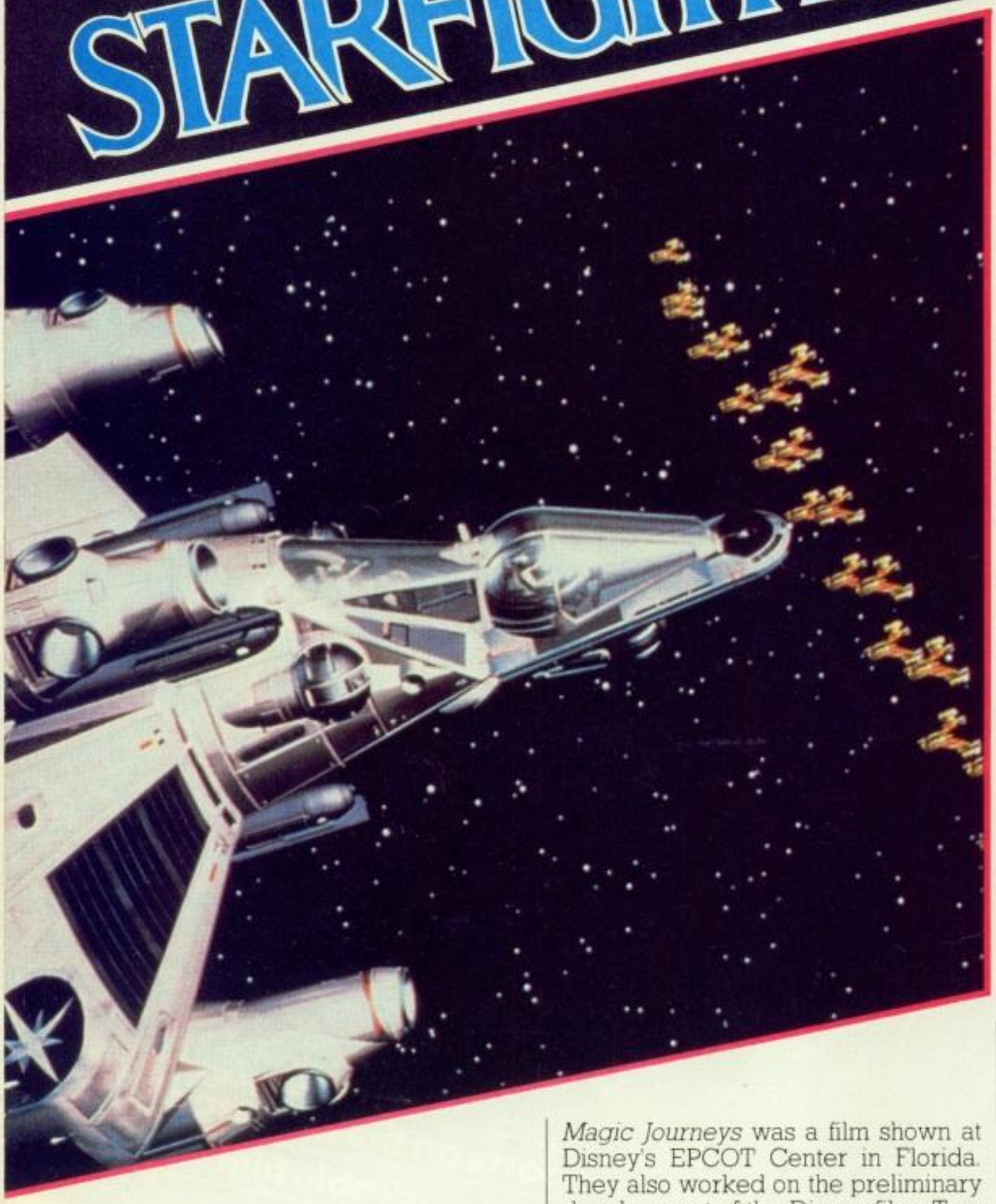
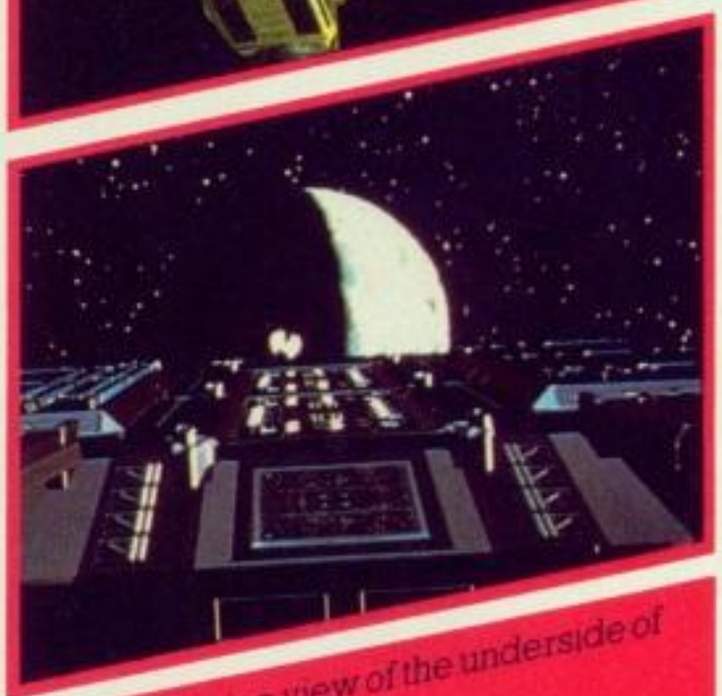
THE MAKING OF

THE LAST STARFIGHTER





Above: this is a view of the underside of the Ko-Dan mothership.

Top: a squadron of Ko-Dan Deckfighters loom over the single Gunstar.

Left: Alex Rogan – the last starfighter – must tackle video game-type odds for real if the universe is to survive.

dent John Whitney Jr and vice president Gary Demos, are pioneers in the art of computer graphics.

Whitney is following in his father's footsteps. He was responsible for the "slit scan" scenes in *2001 – A Space Odyssey*. That was one of the first real uses of computer technology in film making.

The Whitney Jr/Demos partnership began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with some experimental films. These used Whitney Jr's analogue computer devices. In 1972, the partners received an Oscar nomination for their work.

They went on to work on *Futureworld*, *Looker* and *Magic Journeys*. *Magic Journeys* was a film shown at Disney's EPCOT Center in Florida. They also worked on the preliminary development of the Disney film *Tron* before they formed Digital Productions in 1981.

Digital Productions was involved in *The Last Starfighter* right from the script stage. After three months of pre-production, work began on designing screen images conceived by Ron Cobb.

The images are created by using a complicated graphics tablet called an encoding table. Cobb's basic drawings were converted into polygons. These consist of numerous flat-surface units that make up the flat and curved parts of an object being digitised in the computer.

John Whitney Jr explained: "The first thing we do is create the sets, props, locations and actors in the computer, so to speak. You create a set of blueprints.

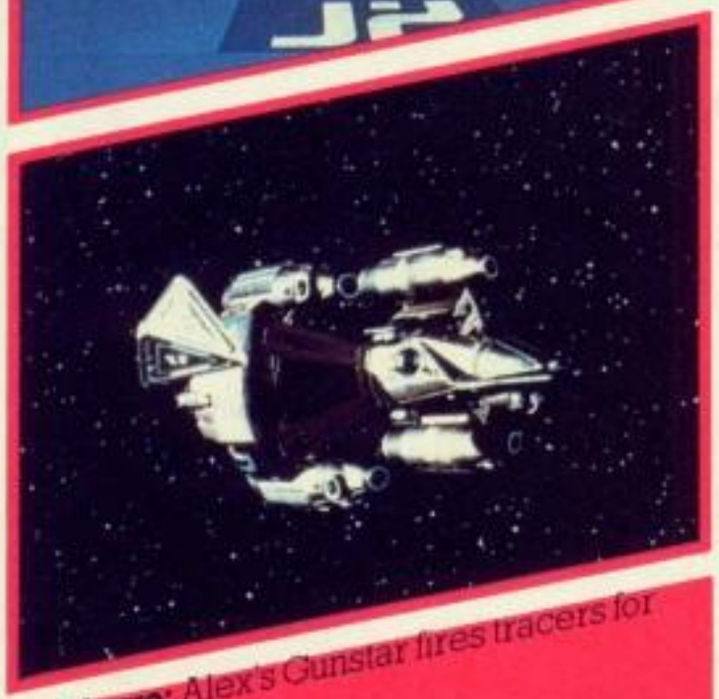
"These are two dimensional drawings, right? But they have front-, back- and side-view data in them. It's possible to create a physical stage from these drawings, like on a set.

"You can build it mathematically in the computer rather than physically. You describe it one time only, from one view, and then you get all views thereafter."

Once the 'models' have been constructed, they can be manipulated in any way. The only restraint is the programmer's imagination.

"You can go in and make the action in the scene conform with the storyboards, or with the director's intuitive feeling about creating dramatic points of view. It's like working with an imaginary, massless camera that can fly anywhere it wants to," Whitney continued.

One of the main advantages of this



Above: Alex's Gunstar fires tracers for target practice.

Top: the Gunstar hangar was the most complicated scene to produce. 400,000 polygons were required.

Right: amazing to think that everything in this scene is computer generated.

system is that each scene can be rehearsed again and again until it is exactly as the director wants it.

Sherry McKenna is Digital Productions' executive producer and production exec for *Starfighter*. She sees the use of CAD (Computer Aided Design) systems as a real boon for film-makers.

"In traditional special effects, the matte painter would go away and create the matte painting. The model maker would go away and create the model. And the animator would go away and plot the animation. You would get all that back on separate pieces of film. You would never get to see them until the end," McKenna said. By this time, it's too late to say that it has not turned out the way you wanted it.

When using a computer for the special effects, you can look at a monitor and decide then and there. "No, I want that Gunstar to move faster. I want that planet farther away." All the objects in any one scene can be manipulated and tailored to suit the exact needs of the script and storyboards before any film footage is wasted.

The objects in a scene are choreographed, lit and colour checked. Then the digital information is converted to film using a film recorder. As if by magic, you have a piece of perfect motion picture.

Using computer graphics isn't just more convenient for the director. It's also far less time-consuming. And it's cheaper than not only standard effect processes, but also the graphics procedures used in the film *Tron*. "There has been a gigantic leap in technology since *Tron*," Whitney admitted.

"Not to denigrate that breakthrough film, *Tron* had an average of 7,000 polygons per film frame of its five minutes of simulation. It took three different companies a year and a half to make that five minutes. *The Last Starfighter* has an average of 350,000 to 400,000 polygons per frame in its twenty-one minutes of simulation. And it took only a year to produce.

"The computer system we were using on *Tron* operated at a rate that would have taken twenty-four years to produce the quantity and quality of graphics used in *Starfighter*."

Sherry McKenna pointed out that computer graphic simulations are also economical when it comes to employing technicians.

"George Lucas has 300 technicians working on a movie, and it takes him three years to produce. Digital Productions had, at maximum, between fifty and sixty, and it took us a year. You don't need inkers, painters and model makers. You don't need that labour-intensive work." All you need is a Cray X-MP and enough space around your building to build a water tower to cool its circuits.

The wonders we have seen in *The Last Starfighter* are only just the beginning for the team that make up Digital Scene Simulations.

During the next few years, we will see a lot more computer graphics in films. Not just sci-fi films, either. Large sums of money can be saved by generating exotic locations on computers. There'll be no need to transport a film crew and actors half way across the world for, maybe, twenty-five minutes of footage.

There's no danger of computers taking the place of actors and actresses, though. After all, you couldn't exactly invite a mainframe computer onto a chat show to promote the film it's currently starring in!

The creative team won't be left out in the cold, either. "The cleverness and innovation that the creative team brings to a film is the most exiting part that you can never ever automate," Whitney said. "Computer graphics are not taking the creative burden away from human beings – it's still on our shoulders." □

Digital scene simulations by Digital Productions, Los Angeles, CA. 1984. All rights reserved.

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THE ARCADE SCENE

Screen games usually appear in the arcades long before we see them on home systems. Andy Harris (aka King Coinop) continues his search to find the best.

At the end of last year, the leading arcade game manufacturers and distributors gathered at a secret location in London. They were showing off the latest developments in video game technology.

Donning my false beard and moustache, I slipped past the security guards and into the exhibition. There, I saw some of the very latest, fiendishly clever machines. The nation's arcaders will be shovelling their currency into these during the next twelve months.

At first sight, I was distinctly underwhelmed. There were no revolutionary breakthroughs on the technical front. A lot of the games had been in the arcades for months. But the designers obviously haven't been idle. In terms of graphic and sound, video games are much more sophisticated.

The most interesting development is the increase in games with a sporting theme. The trend, started by *Track & Field*, now has video versions of just about every sport you can think of.

The one sport conspicuous by its lack of an electronic equivalent is cricket. Perhaps this is because computers aren't powerful enough to cope with our national game. Somewhere out there is a computer whizz-kid who can design a computer cricket game. When he does, it should be called *Howzat!*.

It looks as though video-disc games have reached the end of the groove. Yes, I know they use pits, not grooves; but pits doesn't sound right. There were no new ones on display and apparently there are none in the pipeline.

They are just too expensive to produce at the moment, and manufacturers are working on ways of reducing the cost. When they do, we should be in for a lot of good games.

Elaborate cabinets such as the ones used for *Firefox*, *TX-1* and *Star Rider* are also a thing of the past. The one make of cabinet is now being used for different games (TVG, August, October). The arcade owner simply replaces the printed circuit board, and puts new stickers on the cabinet itself. This may make games less interesting to look at. But, in the long run, it should make them cheaper to play, as it saves the arcade owners money.

This article contains details of some of the best games which were on display at the show: *Crown's Golf*, *Bank Panic*, *Othello* and *Bullfighter*.

Before teeing off on *Crown's Golf*, I had to spend ten minutes reading the instructions. This is definitely the most complicated video game yet.

Before whacking the ball, you must choose the right club. Then adjust your feet and body, check wind speed and direction, inspect the lie of the land and calculate the optimum angle of swing. It sounds complicated, but it's all good fun. The attention to detail makes the game surprisingly realistic.

The screen is divided into several sections. The main part of it shows the view from the golfer's position. The golfer is standing, waiting and ready to play. On the left of the screen is an aerial view of the hole, and a line shows where the ball has travelled. At the top of the screen is a table showing the par, or number of strokes you need to complete a hole. It also shows the number of strokes you have taken.

Eight clubs are available. They range from a wood for teeing off to a spoon for getting out of bunkers, and

THE ARCADE SCENE

a putter for use on the green. Each club is capable of hitting the ball a certain distance only, as in real life, so choosing the right one is vital.

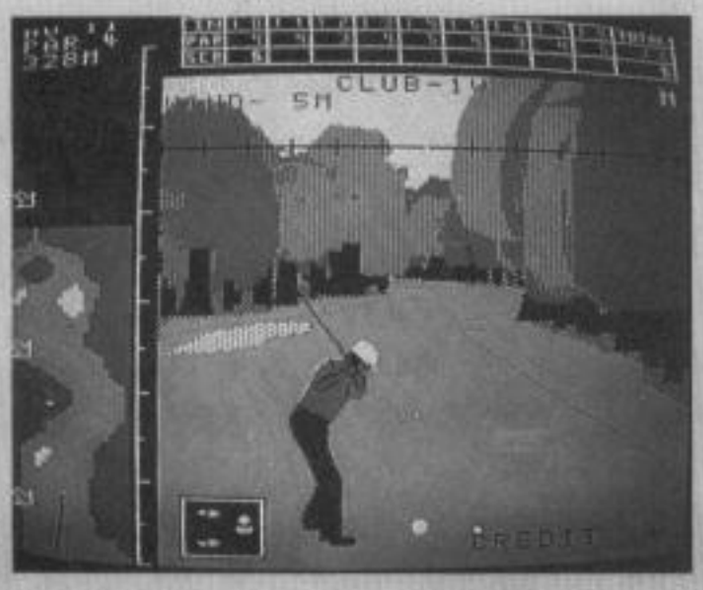
When you arrive on the green, watch out for inclines. These don't show on the screen. And it can be a frustrating experience to see your little ball gently rolling away from the hole.

A spring-loaded bar serves as the club controller; you should treat it with care. Once you've pulled it back in preparation for your stroke, you're committed. No matter how gently you return the bar to its neutral position, the stroke has been made. Unlike real golf, no practice swings are allowed.

The game lasts for a long time and represents excellent value for money. As long as you manage to complete the holes in less than four over par, you can play a full eight holes for twenty or thirty pence. That's a lot cheaper than kitting yourself out with a set of clubs, a yellow pullover, a pair of tartan polystyrene trousers and a funny hat with a bobble on the top.

The only way the real thing scores over *Crown's Golf* is in the sound effect department. Instead of the gentle sounds of wind in the trees and birds hovering overhead, the video game subjects the player to the most monotonous and uninspiring tune ever to be programmed into a poor, innocent chip.

That said, do try the game. I recommend it.



Bank Panic is set in a bank in the old Wild West. It's in the days when men were men.

It's a one- or two-player game, reminiscent of *Tapper*. It requires snap decisions on how to keep the customers satisfied.

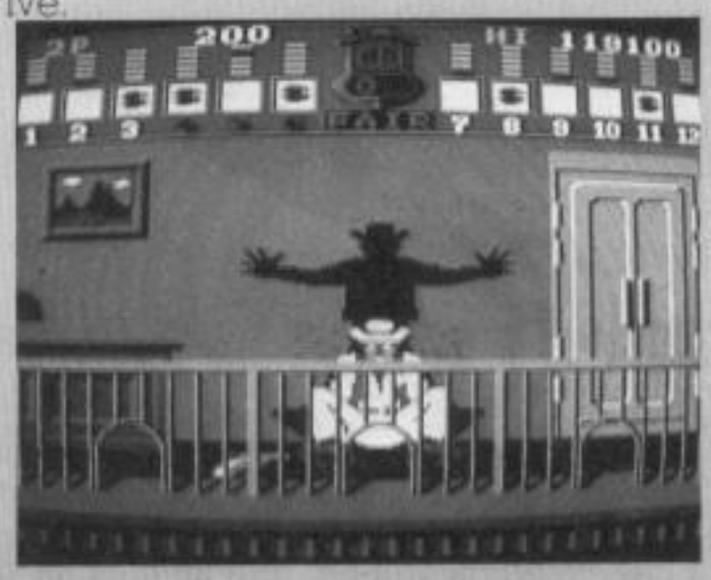
The player looks from behind the bank counter towards the doors – all twelve of them in a line. Above the doors are warning lights to show when someone is approaching. There is also a window in which money bags should appear.

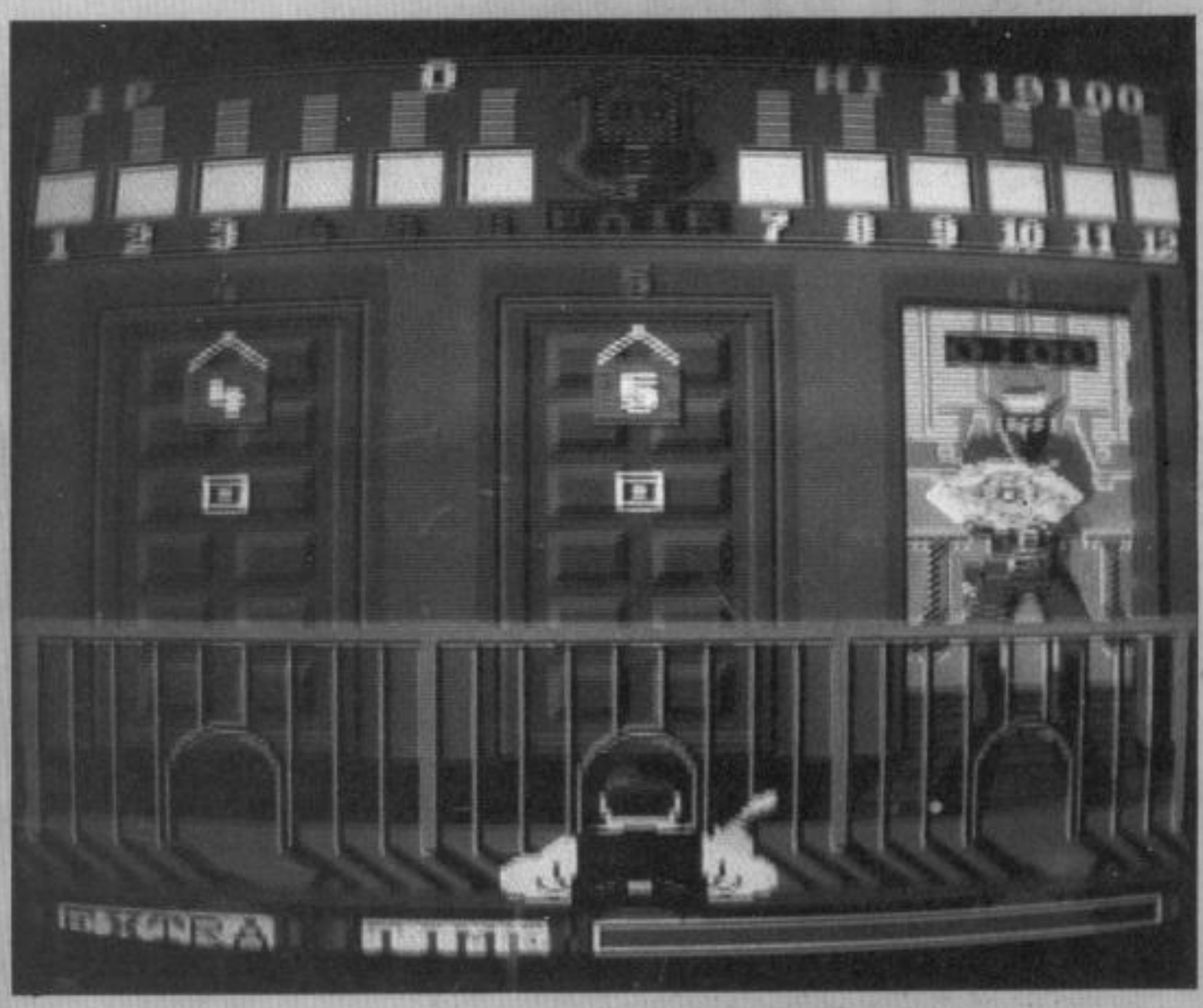
The vital question is 'Who is behind the doors?'. Is it an innocent old lady who's come to deposit her pension? Or is it an unscrupulous outlaw who wants to make a withdrawal without the bother of paying anything in first?

Only three doors are on the screen at any time. By using the three fire buttons, the player can shoot at all three doors or just one or two. When the door opens, a decision has to be made – is it a baddie or a good guy?

If you make the right decision and shoot a baddie, you score points. Refrain from shooting a bona fide customer and a money bag appears in the window at the top of the screen. When all the windows are occupied you move on to the next level. This has the same theme but is more complicated. The bank robbers appear in women's clothing, which I found a bit disconcerting. And they're not above using other dastardly tactics in their search for ill-gotten gains.

The graphics and the sound are both excellent. But after a while *Bank Panic* does become slightly repetitive.





THE ARCADE SCENE

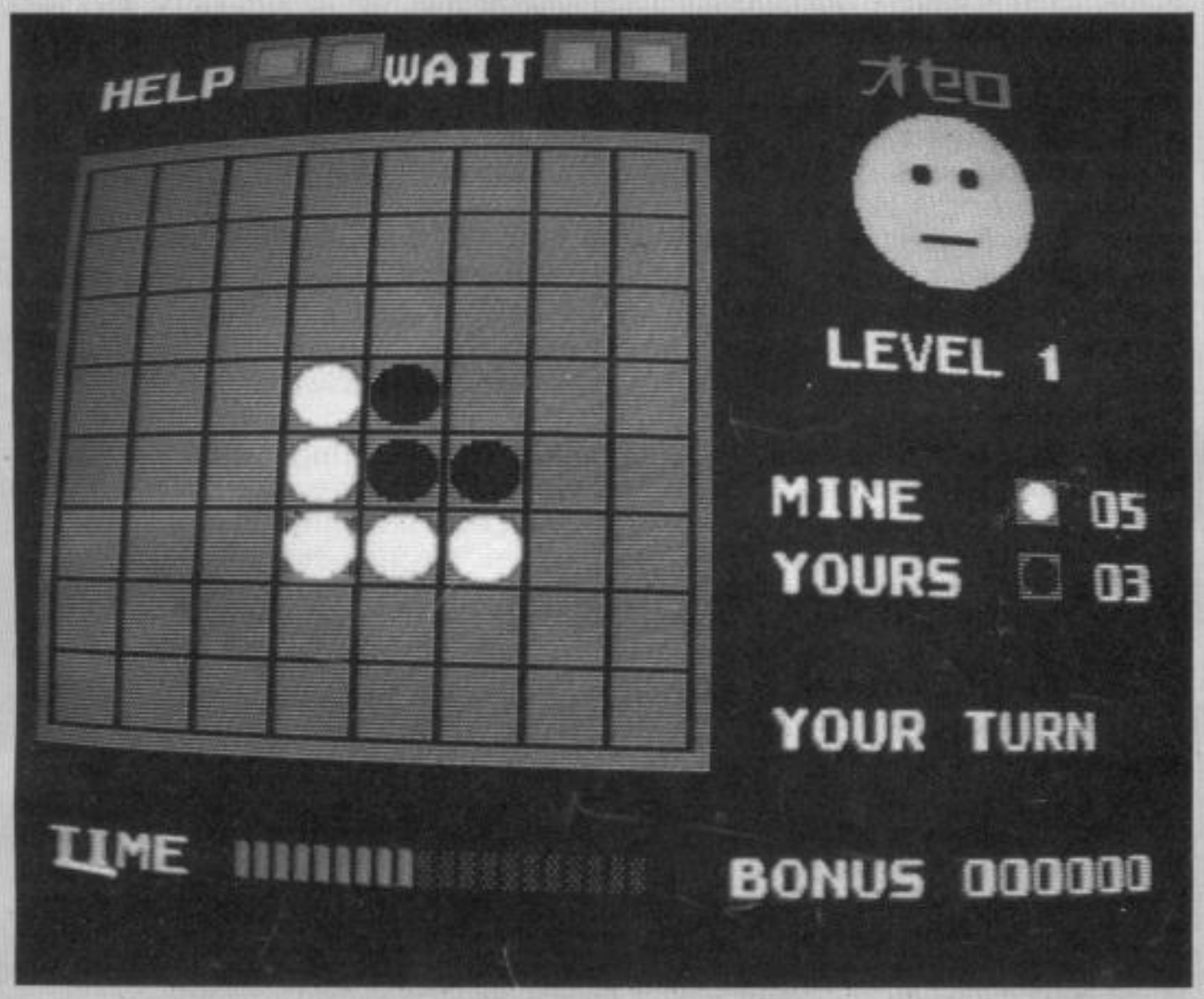
Othello is one of the most popular games in Japan. It has been for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. This video version has only been around for a few months, and is probably the simplest arcade game since *Pong*.

Two people can play each other, or one can play against the computer. With five levels of skill, the computer makes a formidable opponent.

The game takes place on a board with sixty-four squares. One player uses black pieces and the other white. The idea is to capture your opponent's pieces by trapping them between your own. This can be done vertically, horizontally or diagonally, moving one piece at a time. The game ends when a player loses all his pieces, or when the board is full. The player with the most pieces on the board is the winner.

It sounds simple and it is simple to play. But winning is a different matter. In case you get stuck, the computer will come to your rescue and advise you on a move. But, with practice, you should be able to rely on your own judgement to beat the machine on the lower levels.

You can buy a real live version of *Othello* for just a couple of pounds. So, if you get keen on the game, getting your own would make economic sense. This video version is for you if you only fancy an occasional game. Or if you don't have any friends to play with, and would rather press a button than move a counter.



An unsuspecting arcader could be excused for thinking that a game called *Bullfighter* would probably be about bull fighting. Or that, at the very least, there would be an enraged cow somewhere in evidence. You would be wrong. *Bullfighter* is an ice hockey game!

When I first saw it, I assumed there had been a mix-up at the factory. But, no. *Bullfighter* is definitely about pucks, hockey sticks and ice skates – not matadors, toreadors and bright red capes.

Having had so much fun with the

name, the game was something of an anticlimax. I found the three-quarters view of the play field very disconcerting. And the graphics, in general, were a bit hazy.

Controlling the players by means of a cursor was difficult at first. I kept hitting the 'pass' button instead of the one marked 'shoot'.

After a few games, I managed to sort myself out, and scored some goals. Having amassed a few points, I was able to work out what was going on.

Each side has five players including the goal-keeper. Using the cursor, you decide which of them has control of the puck. Without the cursor around him, a player is no use at all.

If the other side has the puck, you can capture it by body-checking from the front.

Keep control by passing, dodging opponents and, of course, scoring. If you score enough goals you will be given the chance to earn bonus points.

This is not an easy game to get to grips with. But I've got a feeling that a lot of people are going to be spending a lot of time on it. Personally, I think some bovine action would appeal to many gamers. How about bullfighting on ice? There's an idea for a really original game. □

COMPUTE

In the first of a regular series on the mysteries behind music and the micro, Dave Harvey explains the basics for synthesisers.

A lot of people believe that synthesisers are wonder machines that can compose music, record it, mix it, press it onto record, deliver it to the store, and promote it. Well, that's an exaggeration. But a lot of people who slag synthesisers probably couldn't tell you what one is.

A synthesiser is just as much a musical instrument as, say, a tuba or guitar. Also, synthesisers are not only keyboard controlled. There are synthesisers that can be controlled by pads, or guitar, or even a woodwind instrument.

Most synthesisers are keyboard controlled, so let's talk about them in this month's article.

Basically, a synthesiser is a set of modules linked together. They allow the user to create or synthesise sound by stripping down the three main components of sound: pitch, tone (timbre) and volume. These three are inseparable in a sound; you can't have one without the other.

Pitch is how high or low the perceived sound is. Tone gives the sound its character – how you differentiate between, for example, a guitar and a horn. Volume is how loud we receive the sound.

As well as these three components, a synthesiser can determine and control the dynamics of a sound. The dynamics of a sound are how it varies over an amount of time. For instance, as time goes by, the sound might get softer, or brighter.

Let's go into more depth, starting with **pitch**. What makes sound is vibrations in the air. These go into our ears as information signals, arriving at our brain, which converts it to the sound we perceive.

The pitch depends on how fast the sound waves, or vibrations, were moving in the air. This is measured in cycles per second (cps, hertz). The more complete cycles the wave takes in a second, the higher the pitch will be. The fewer cycles per second, the lower the pitch.

Did you know that, if you clapped your hands 440 times per second, you would produce middle C?

The human ear detects frequencies between about twenty to 20,000 (20K) hertz – about ten octaves. If you have a frequency going at 440 hertz (middle C), and double it to 880 hertz, you will hear C exactly an octave above. If you halve it to 220 hertz, you'll hear C at the octave directly below middle C. This goes for any frequency: for each octave rise, the frequency doubles.

Now let's look at tone. When you hear a note you normally don't hear just that one frequency – you hear many all at the same time.

If you're confused, here's an example. Say we played middle C on a piano. When that note sounds, we're hearing not just that note but also a lot of other notes at the same time. We could be hearing, for example, A, F, G and B. These notes are called harmonics or overtones. The reason we hear middle C above them is because that is the loudest of them all. It's called the fundamental.

Harmonics are what give different musical instruments their own character. Clarinets have odd harmonics, and brass instruments have numerous ones as opposed to woodwind instruments which have only a few.

There's not a great deal to say about **volume**. The higher the peaks and the lower the troughs of a sound wave, the higher and lower that sound will hit your ear.

Now that you know how any sound is constructed, we'll see how it relates to a synthesiser.

The method of synthesiser I'll be using is the subtractive method, rather than the additive method. In this, you are given a soundwave, rich in harmonics, and you take away the unwanted haramonics to produce the desired sound. Additive synthesis is the method in which adding sine waves with different harmonic values gives you the desired sound.

Most synthesisers in your local music shop are of the subtractive variety, as they are usually cheaper to manufacture.

The most common modules found on a synthesiser are VCO, VCF, VCA-ENV, and LFO. Remember our three components of sound? Of course you do. On a synthesiser, pitch is the VCO, tone is the VCF, and volume is the VCA.

VCO stands for voltage-controlled oscillator. The most common things found on VCOs are normally a frequency or footage dial, and waveform outputs.

The frequency or footage dial determines what sort of pitch the VCO will produce, normally rising in semitones – a chromatic scale. In the old days of pipe organs, wind/air going through certain length pipes would produce different pitches. As you doubled the length of the pipe, the sound would be heard exactly one octave lower. So sound coming from a four-foot pipe would be one octave lower than a two-foot pipe, and so on.

On a synthesiser, you use the footage dial with the same sort of idea. As you turn the dial counter clockwise, and the footage gets greater, the sound will get lower. As with the pipe organ, if you set the footage dial from two feet to four feet, the sound would be heard one octave lower.

The range of the dials are normally from two feet to sixty-four feet. The latter is inaudible; a series of clicks would be produced, to be used for modulating.

The waveform outputs are the things that go to the filter and 'get dealt with'. Once you've read about the different waves and filter, you should get the idea. These are some of the most common waveforms found on a synthesiser: sine, triangle, square, pulse, and sawtooth/ramp.

A sine wave is a smooth, continuously repeating, fundamental waveform. It has no harmonics: harmonics are themselves sine waves.

A triangle wave, shapewise, is just like the sine – except the curves have been straightened ad sharpened. This gives it harmonics. The sharper and flatter the edges of a waveform, the higher the harmonic content is.

A triangle wave also shares the sine's path. It starts out, rises smoothly to a peak, and descends smoothly to the starting point. Then it starts all over again.

A square wave exists in only two states: high and low. In electrical terms, this could be translated to a circuit being switched on and off. It has odd harmonics and the sound produced is quite hollow – reminis-

ER MUSIC

cent of a clarinet. If we were to analyse the harmonic structure of a sustained note from a clarinet and a square wave, the similarity would be striking.

The pulse wave, like the square, exists in only two states: high and low. But you can determine how long the pulse wave will spend in its high state as opposed to its low.

The time spent in high state is known as the duty cycle. A pulse wave with, for example, 40% duty cycle would spend 40% of its time in the high state and 60% in the low. As the duty cycle gets lower, the sound produced will have a very reedy quality, as more bass harmonics are introduced.

A sawtooth wave is the one you'll probably use most. It is very rich in harmonics, and the sound produced has a big, fat chunky brassy quality. The path it takes is very simple also. It starts out, rises smoothly to a peak, drops back to the starting point, and starts over again.

As well as waveform outputs, a VCO will probably have a noise generator – usually **a white noise**. White noise is a combination of all the frequencies in the audio spectrum added to random amplitudes, or volumes. It is used for the production of such noises as wind, rain, and thunder.

On some synthesisers, you may find two VCOs. With two oscillators, you can work wonders. You can add two different waveforms, such as a square and a sawtooth. Or you could use one to modulate the other – if a device called a cross mod is incorporated. You can also detune from one to another.

On a dual VCO synthesiser, one of the oscillators will have a fine tune knob, usually to the degree of a quarter of a note. If you slightly detune one VCO from the other, a chorus effect is introduced.

Let me explain this with the concept of **phase**. This is a bit tricky to explain.

A periodic (continuously repeating) waveform is said to go through a 360° phase per cycle. This is slightly like a video game – when you complete a level, you could say "I've just completed a phase".

Waves are exactly 'in phase' if they start at exactly the same time – if they have their point of 0° at the same time. When two oscillators aren't producing exactly the same frequency – even if one started the cycle only a fraction before the other – they are out of phase. This can give the sound extra depth.

If you were to listen to the two oscillators separately, you wouldn't notice the difference in frequency. But if you listen to them simultaneously, everything is apparent. Listen closely, and you might hear them going in and out of phase with each other.

The period that two waveforms are apart is known as the phase difference, or angle.

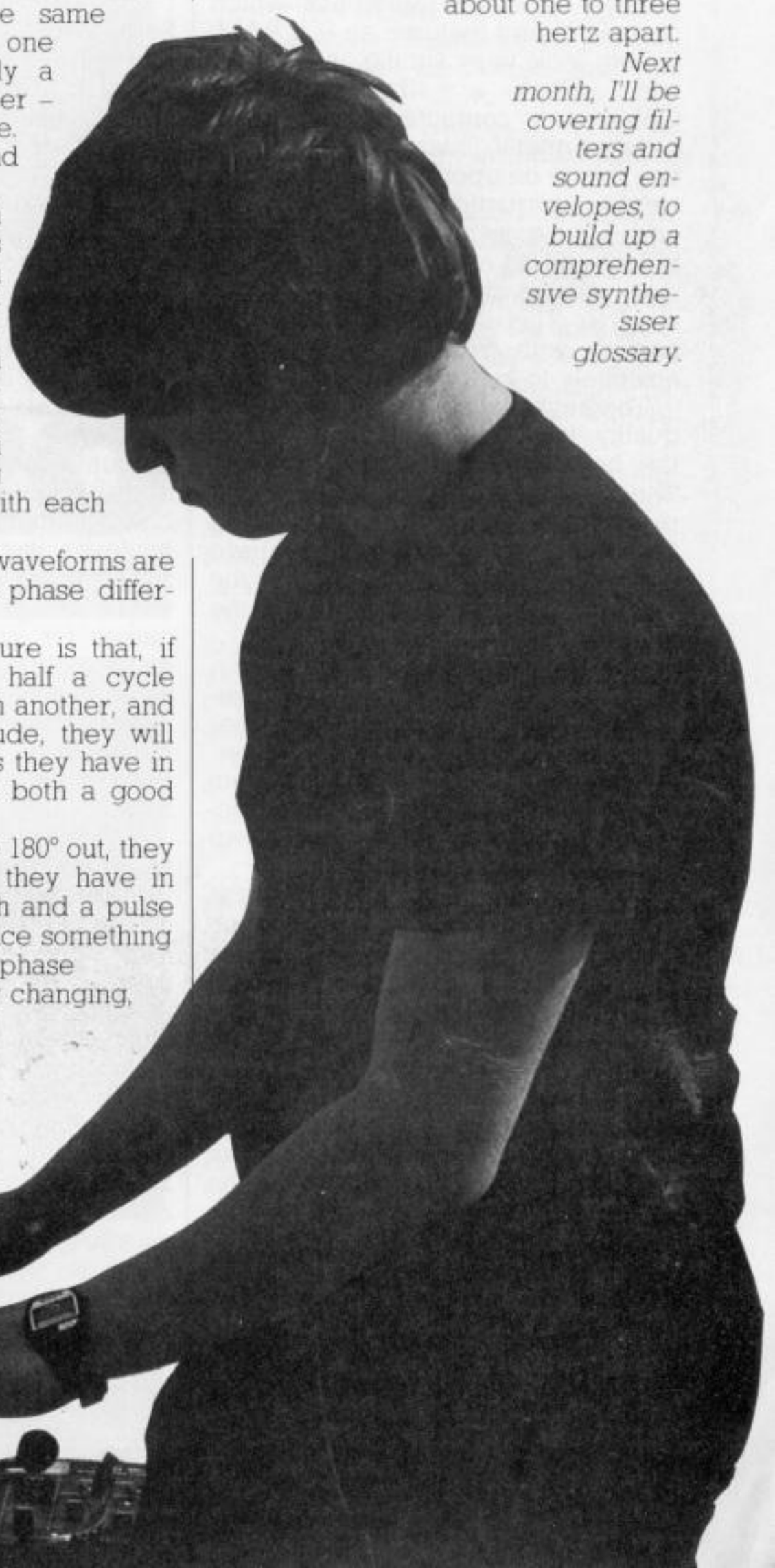
One interesting feature is that, if one wave is exactly half a cycle (180°) out of phase with another, and is of the same amplitude, they will cancel the components they have in common. This can be both a good and a bad thing.

When two waves are 180° out, they cancel the harmonics they have in common. So a sawtooth and a pulse cancelling could produce something interesting. But, as the phase difference is constantly changing, the waves will cancel only for a very short time. It's not enough for you to benefit from the different timbre, if there was one.

If you could invert one of the waveforms, all you will produce is a tremolo, or fluctuation in volume.

The bad thing is that you could be bashing out a melody, the oscillators will cancel, and for a moment the amplitude will drop to almost nothing. The best way to avoid this problem, when you want a chorus effect, is to have the oscillators running about one to three hertz apart.

Next month, I'll be covering filters and sound envelopes, to build up a comprehensive synthesiser glossary.



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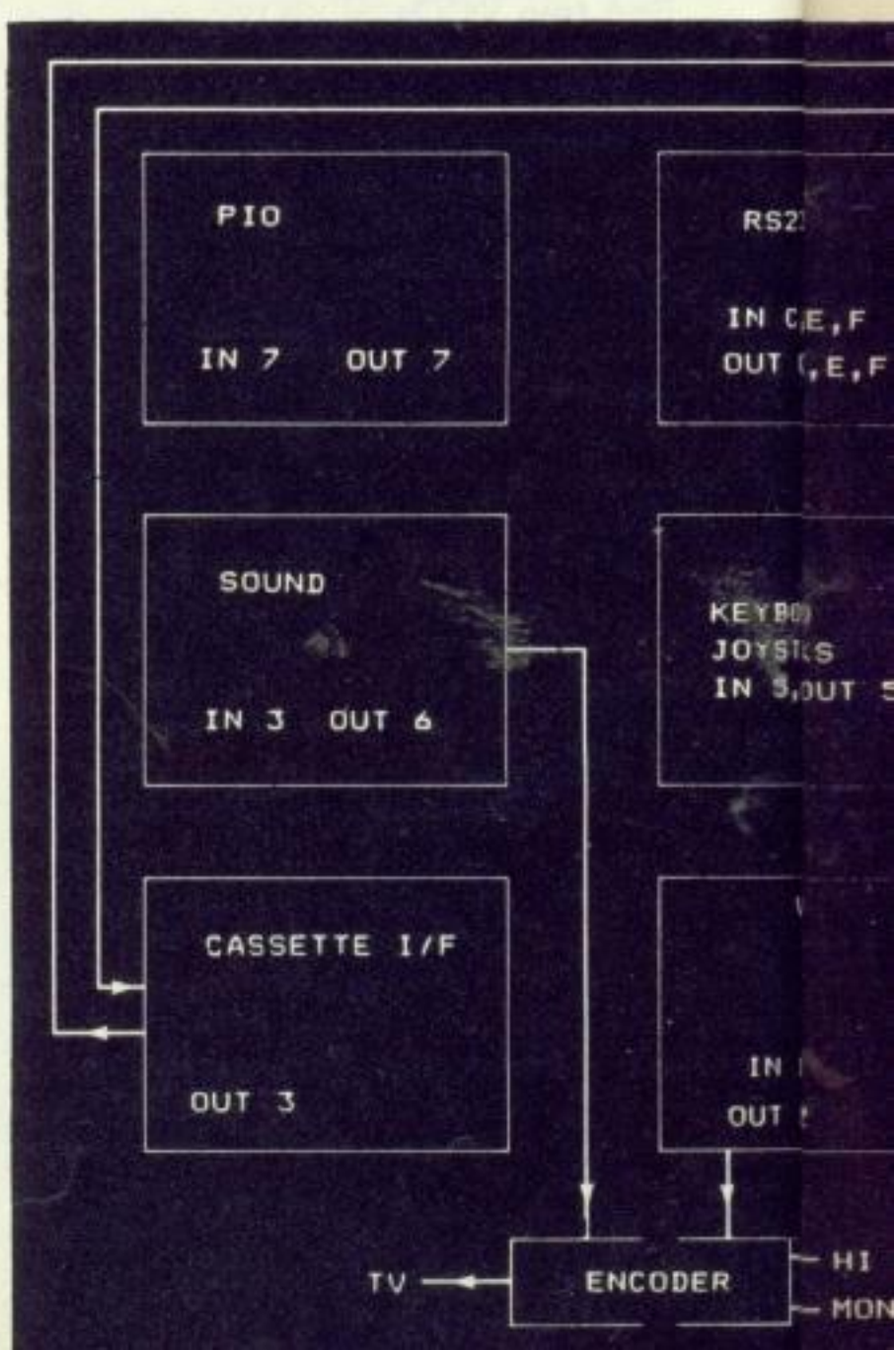
Darrin Willinso



Chances are that you haven't heard of the Memotech range of computers and peripherals. The reason for this is lack of publicity – plus the fact that the system has been overshadowed by the arrival of both the QL and MSX.

Despite its rather candid entry into the UK market, the Memotech has a highly commendable specification. It comes in two models: the MTX 500 which costs £199 and sports a 48k memory, and the MTX 512 which costs £275 and features an 80k RAM.

Both look very similar in appearance. They are both compact CBM64-size computers in a black brushed metal finish. The first thing you notice on opening the box is the sturdy construction of the micro. The whole thing is made of tough, durable metal as opposed to the customary plastic casing we have grown used to. This is good news for any parents with hyperactive kids who are likely to kick it about a bit.

The keyboard, too, is of a very high quality. It gives a professional feel to the home micro, which is unusual. The layout is simple yet comprehensive. The eight function keys (sixteen if you use the Shift key) are positioned separately from the QWERTY keyboard and the numeric/cursor key pad.

Another nice feature of the keyboard is the 'break' key arrangement. Here, two buttons – on either side of the space bar – must be pressed together to obtain a full system reset. This prevents a lot of accidental memory wipes, which we have all caused at least once.

Yet another nice feature of the Memotech is the wide range of input/output sockets, situated on the rear and side of the machine. There are provisions for two Atari-style joysticks, TV, monitor (composite video), external audio to link the micro to your hi-fi or ghetto blaster, Centronics printer, cassette recorder, and RS 232. Finally, there is an expansion port, not unlike the Spectrum's, on the side.

A comprehensive 253-page A4 instruction manual comes with the MTX series of computers. This is concerned mainly with the ins and outs of Basic programming. Programming Memotechs is a little different to most other computers, in that the graphics are handled by a separate language: MTX graphics. This works independently of MTX Basic and the Z80 assembler.

In addition to these three internal languages there is one entitled Noddy. This new language is best described as a text version of Logo. It acts as a simple word processor that anyone can use. Thirteen pages of the user manual are devoted to Noddy, so there should be no problems with the initial stages.

Software. Despite its low key appearance, a surprisingly large number of software houses are producing games, utilities and languages for this system. On the game side, there are companies such as Micro Power, Level 9, MC Lothlorien and Continental Software, to name but a few. According to Memotech, there are well over fifty games available for this system.

There is undoubtedly a reasonable supply of games. But the Memotech needs the support of some of the bigger manufacturers – like Activision – before it gains the street credibility it needs to be a popular choice among gamers. Memotech, however, is caught in the hardware/software vicious circle whereby software companies won't produce games for systems with only a few owners, and the number of owners won't increase until there is enough software. Some of the big boys must be prepared to stick their neck out if this system is to be the hit it deserves to be.

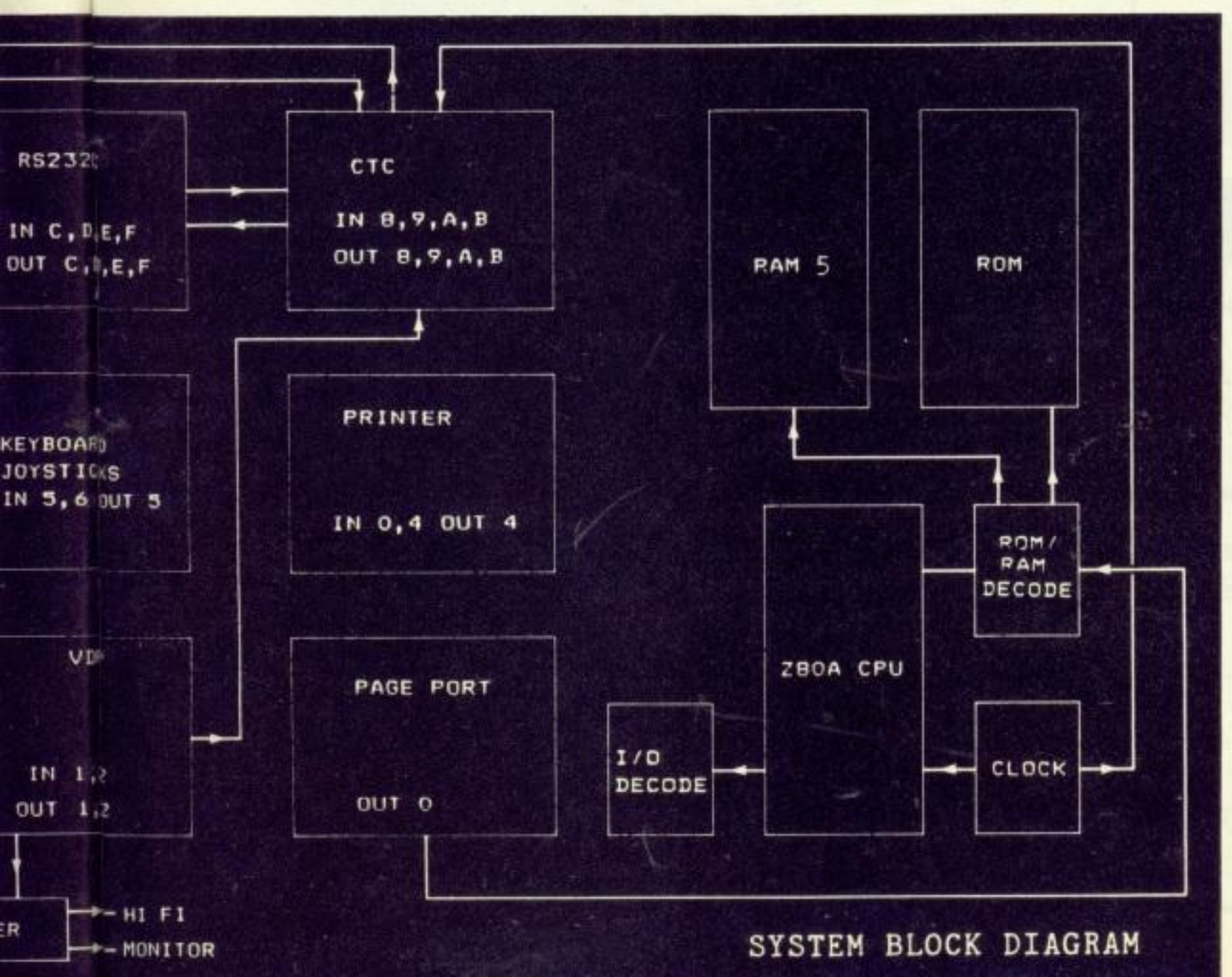
The games software available is of a reasonable quality, with nice graphics and sound. The game ideas do leave a little to be desired in the originality department. Much of what is available is purely arcade rip-offs and under rather flimsy disguises – *Killipede* by Continental Software is one such. Hopefully, standards of game originality will improve as more computers are sold.

Peripherals. The MTX series of computers are among the best home systems around to date for sheer numbers and quality of peripherals.

Tape recorders can be of any type. There is no official recorder that has to be bought, which is one of the Commodore and Atari drawbacks. Virtually any recorder will work, even the battered old re-

UNSUNG HERO

Jon Williamson looks at the Memotech MTX 512



SYSTEM BLOCK DIAGRAM

corders lying around in the office.

If you choose a faster means of data retrieval, you are spoilt for choice. Thanks to the two independent RS 232 ports and the sixty-way disc drive bus, you can connect up to four 5.25 and/or eight inch floppy disc drives, Memotech silicon discs (not unlike Eproms), or even Winchester-style hard discs. These give you up to ten megabytes of instant information on tap.

Internal ROMS can be added, rather like the BBC micro. So you can use additional languages such as Pascal, or powerful word processors such as MTX New Word. More ROMS should be available fairly soon.

Internal RAM shouldn't be a problem, either. The MTX 512 comes with 80k memory, which is more than most home micros give you. Of this, 64k is accessible by the humble user. What's more, user RAM can be expanded to 512k in increments of 64k, 128k or 256k. So you are not without expansion possibilities.

The MTX series has quite impressive graphics and sound capabilities, as well. The machines sport a 256 x 192 pixel resolution, thirty-two user-definable sprites and sixteen colours which are fairly similar to those of the CBM 64. There are also eight user-definable graphics windows, 128 user-definable characters, and 40 x 24 character text display.

Sound, too, is well catered for, with a four-voice sound generation second only to Commodore's SID chip (and the Yamaha CX5M, of course).

Compatibility is yet another good point on the side of this machine. It is CP/M compatible, thanks to the Z80A central processor. Theoretically, it is possible to develop chips with different dialects of Basic that use the Z80 CPU – for example, the Adam Smartbasic, Spectravideo Basic, Sinclair Basic, and even MSX Basic. Pursuing this line of technology may well prove profitable. After all, wouldn't you buy a machine that could potentially run the software of all those systems?

The Memotech MTX 512 proves excellent value for money and is a good alternative to the overpriced BBC micro. It might, however, be prudent to wait a while and see how the software side of things picks up in the next few months.□

Put yourself to the test

Try this mini I.Q. test to find out if you are eligible for membership of Mensa, the high I.Q. society. Four out of these five questions right and you will probably qualify. Which is the odd one out in each of these five questions? Answers are upside down at the base of this advertisement.

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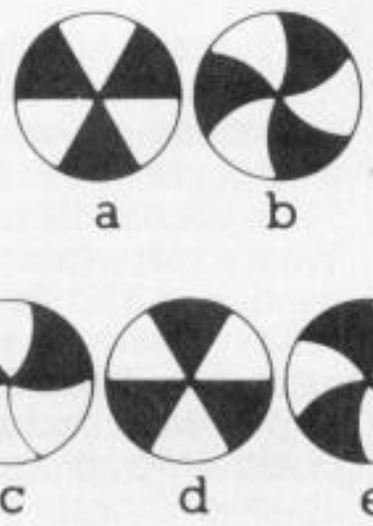

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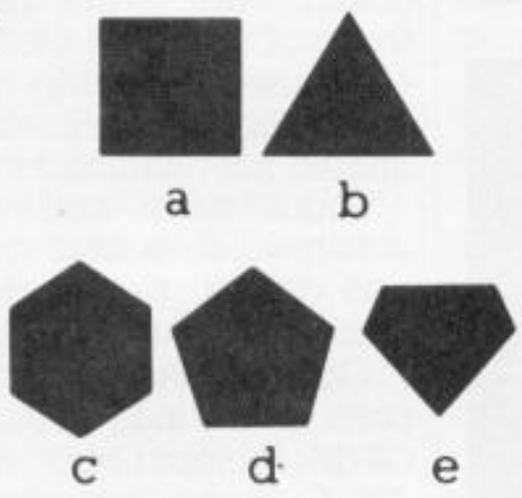

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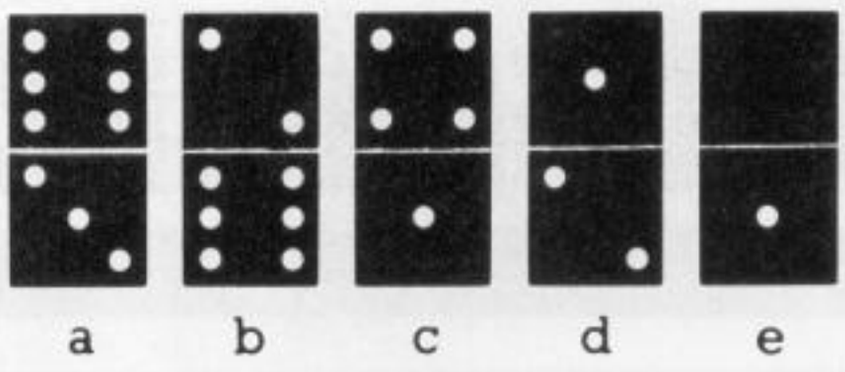

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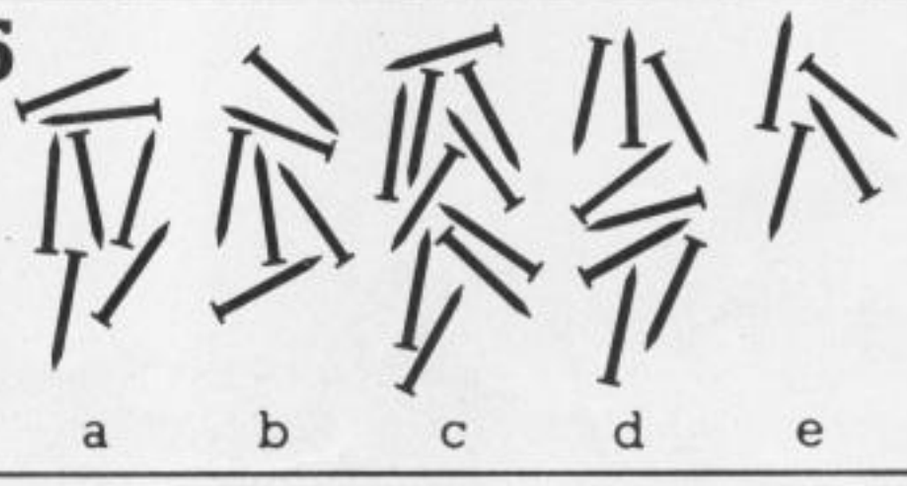

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1 All entries received by the closing date, 31st January, 1985, will be examined and will be judged by the editor.
2 The Competition winner will be advised by post.
3 All entries must be made on forms cut from *TV Gamer*, and photocopies will not be acceptable.
4 The prize is to UK standards and servicing cannot be guaranteed overseas.
5 The prize will be awarded to the contestant whose answer is, in the opinion of the Editor or his appointed panel, the most apt and amusing.
6 The editor's decision is final.

HEROES INC

By Tim Quinn and Dicky Howett

AL CHEMIST and TELETRON have been swallowed by PAC MAN. The only way to escape is to..... PLAY THE GAME!

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AND THEN THERE'S THE GHASTLY GRINNING GOONS!

GRIN!

GRIN!

TO SAY NOTHING OF THE DREADFUL DOG DUNES!

STEAM

WHAT'S THIS GAME YOU'RE PLAYING, TELETRON? I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THESE HAZARDS!

JOG! JOG! JOG!

GAME? IT'S NO GAME, AL! IT'S JUST THE EVERYDAY DANGERS I FACE ON MY DAILY JOG. CRACKS IN THE PAVEMENT, JEERING SCHOOL KIDS AND DOG MUCK!

GRIN! GRIN! LOOK AT THE STUPID JOGGER!

STEAM

WELL, WE'D BETTER GET ON WITH THE RACE... HUH?

THE AUDIENCE SEATING GOES OVER HERE, JOE...

BARGE!

WELCOME TO THE *FIRST* GAME SHOW *LIVE* FROM INSIDE PAC MAN! AND LET'S HAVE A BIG *HAND* FOR OUR TWO CONTESTANTS!

??

IT SAYS HERE YOU'RE BOTH INTO "*SAVING THE WORLD*". FOR WHAT? A RAINY DAY? *HA! HA!* ONLY KIDDING! YOU'RE BOTH MARVELLOUS CONTESTANTS! WE WISH YOU *LUCK*, AND I MEAN THAT MOST SINCERELY, FOLKS. *OKAY*, LET'S GET ON WITH THE SHOW!

WHAT TH...!?

AN IRON GIRDER? DONKEY KONG MUST BE HERE!

KLANG!

NOPE! IT'S JUST THAT **DONKEY STAGEHAND!** WATCH IT, **WALLY!**

SORRY BOBBY.

BLAST!

5,000! 8,000! 10,000!

WE'RE THE **GOOGLIES** AND **THIS** IS WHAT WE DO!

RAM!

OKAY, LET'S PLAY **WALLY'S KATERPILLER KILLER** GAME! WATCH OUT FOR THE **GOOGLIES**, *FELLAHS!*

GOOGLIES? WHAT DO *THEY* DO?

URG! IT FIGURES!

BY THE *SEVEN RINGS OF SATURN!* PURE **NEBULIC RAYS** ARE HAVING NO EFFECT AGAINST THIS **KATERPILLER KILLER!** IT MUST BE A **MUTANT!**

POP

ARGH! MY *BLASTER!* WE'RE FINISHED!

FOR A FURTHER **40,000** POINTS AND A *CUDDLY TOY*, CAN YOU NAME THE LAST **U.S. PRESIDENT** TO BE ASSASSINATED BY A MAN WEARING A GINGER **WIG?**

WE'VE JUST **ONE** CHANCE... I'LL SEND OUT A **DISTRESS SIGNAL** TO THAT NEW GAME!

THE MAGIC ROUNDABOUT? HOW CAN **DOUGAL** AND **FLORENCE** HELP US?

TIK! TIK!

BLAM!

TAKE YOUR **TIME.** YOU HAVE **60 SECONDS** BEFORE THE *KATERPILLER* **KRUSHES** YOU!

NOT **THE MAGIC ROUNDABOUT... *THUNDERBIRDS!***

AND WELL, **INTERNATIONAL RESCUE** SAVED US FROM THE ***KATERPILLER KILLER***, BUT NOW WE'RE IN AN EVEN **TIGHTER** SPOT!

AND IT'S ALL **YOUR** FAULT!

I ***TOLD*** YOU NOT TO TRY PLAYING ANY *"GAMES"* WITH **LADY PENELOPE!**

YOU'VE WON **50** PAIRS OF **NYLON STOCKINGS!**

OOOOHH!

TIME FOR **BED!**

BOING!

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RETURN TO EDEN

"What Level 9 does, it does extremely well."* So Mike Lewis praises the second of its Silicon Dream adventure trilogy, Return To Eden. *He also gives plenty of tips on how to get started, past the initial problems and involved in the action.

Level 9 first appeared on the adventure scene with its adaptation of the original adventure – *Colossal Caves*. This set the pattern for its later adventures. And seventy locations were added to the original 200, with masses of descriptive prose for each. These were followed by *Adventure Quest* and *Dungeon Adventure* which completed the *Middle Earth* trilogy.

Level 9 is now well known for its text adventures, which run on almost all the popular micros. They combine frighteningly efficient text-compression with intriguing puzzles and well-constructed plots. It has stuck with the idea of a series of adventures, and so produced *Snowball*, the first of the *Silicon Dream* trilogy written by programmer Pete Austin.

Snowball is set on the giant colony ship, Snowball 9. This was on a voyage to the stars, its colonists cocooned in protective ice. But something went disastrously wrong, and Snowball 9 looked set to fly into the sun.

This is where Kim Kimberley, the hero of the adventure, came in, and saved Snowball from certain disaster. *Return To Eden* carries on from

RETURN TO EDEN

where *Snowball* left off – though you don't need to have played *Snowball* to enjoy *Eden*.

Kim has bravely saved the interstellar ship. But the control room video camera shows a different story. It records Kim entering the room and destroying it with a fire bomb! Once the Snowball is in orbit, the crew discover that the ship has been sabotaged. Kim is found guilty, and sentenced to death.

Luckily (there wouldn't be much of an adventure otherwise), Kim escapes from the ship in a stratoglider. So starts *Return To Eden*, with you taking the part of Kim. . .

I played the Spectrum version of this adventure. The Commodore 64 and Amstrad versions are similar. The BBC has separate pictures, and the Atari and Memotech versions are text only.

Eden is the popular name for the planet Eridani A, which is earthlike and habitable without terraforming. You are told that the plantlife is legendary. The booklet accompanying the game mentions the Piers Anthony *Xanth* series as one of the inspirations for the plot, and the plants are one reflection of this.

As in *Xanth*, the plants – such as stone fruit trees, and balloon plants – fulfill a strange variety of functions. Some of the puns associated with these plants are just terrible! The whole adventure has a good sense of humour.

Return To Eden is something of a departure for Level 9. The company has concentrated on its vast quantities of text in all previous games, as it has graphics. These take the form of fairly small pictures, which are shown at each location. They are not outstanding, but they do convey some feeling of your location.

The screen is divided into two. One-third of the top area contains graphics, and the lower area handles text. The descriptions for each location are fairly short, but detailed. Level 9's ability to fit in 240 locations, each with its own graphics, is an impressive piece of compression.

If you don't want pictures, they can be turned off with the command WORDS and turned on again with PICTURES.

You start the adventure in the stratoglider cabin, having just escaped from Snowball. What do you do now?

Well, the stratoglider has two other rooms: a padded cell and a walk-in cupboard. You can leave the stratoglider with the instruction OUT – the adventure takes the usual two- or three-word input. Once outside, you can move about. You'll soon find yourself beside a large molehill.

But there's a problem. The crew of the Snowball have realised that you have escaped, and come down to find you and carry out the imposed death sentence. This means that you receive a brief warning from the Snowball, then they will reverse their engines and burn you to death.

What can you do about this? If you stay in the stratoglider, they'll still get you. Your only escape is by going underground, to avoid the blast.

First, you'll need some items from the stratoglider's cupboard. You'll find a red suit, a geiger counter, calculator, watch, tent and compass.

You can only carry or wear five items. The tent is useless, and the calculator appears so. So take the other items. The compass is an absolute necessity. While you are carrying it, you are informed of the possible exits from each location you are in. This makes the adventure far easier to map thoroughly.

Now leave the stratoglider. Head for the molehill, which appears to be the only access to underground. Once here, digging takes you down to a network of tunnels and caves.

You'll have to get a fair way from the surface to escape the blast of Snowball's engines, so keep going down. Among the tunnels at the bottom of the molehill is a comfortable cave, carpetted with leaves. Wait here and rest, while Snowball's crew hunts in vain.

When the blasts of the engine have died away, you are free to return to the surface. But the direction you came in is blocked!

Head east from your cave, and you'll find a junction in the tunnels with access to the surface. Unfortunately, you need a spade to dig your way out. But don't panic. There's an abandoned spade lying close by, and this will get you to the surface.

Snowball 9's engines have left the surface heaavily irradiated. Luckily, your geiger will warn you of this – wait until it's safe before emerging.

The landscape that greets your eyes is ruined, burnt, and consisting mainly of plains of drifting ashes. To the east is a forest untouched by the fires. This is where you should head.

The only civilisation on this planet is a robot-controlled city, heavily fortified and protected. You must head

Some of the scenes in Return to Eden. It continues the story of Spaceship Snowball. The Worm In Paradise concludes the Trilogy.

PHOTOGRAPHS: PHILIP DE-ASHA

SPECIFICATION

Name: Return To Eden
Software house: Level 9
Price: £9.95
Micro: Amstrad CPC464
Atari 800XL
BBC
Commodore 64
Memotech
Spectrum 48K

Rating:
value★★★★
graphics★★★
sound—
complexity★★★★
satisfaction★★★★

south and west.
What now?
You are at a tunnel junction.
Exits are east, west and up.
What now?
You are at the tunnel's end.
The only exit is west.
What now?

wait until it is safe!
The geiger counter is ticking
slowly now
You are beside the charred
remains of a spacecraft on a
bleak, burnt plain. Exits are
north, east, south, west and
down.

What now? S
You are on green sward which
ends at a high cliff. Exits
are north, west, northwest and
down.
You can see a sweet pea
nestled in the leaves.
A helicopter gunship clatters

here for help: it, too, is to the east.

The forest contains plenty of strange plants, but they don't pose much obstacle to your progress. There is one major problem: you have been affected by the radiation, despite your red suit (which the local fauna take great offence to, by the way). Soon you'll begin to feel weak, your hair drops out – then you die!

There has to be an answer to your problem. It comes in the shape of a pill-fir, which grows a pill to cure you. This is on the other side of the river. To cross it, you'll need a boat and some oars. This is where the local flora come in.

Nothing that grows on Eden is as it seems. So examine everything you meet there very carefully.

Having found your boat and oars, you can approach the river. You'll now be stopped by the river's guardian, a large leviathan who won't let you past. You must feed him something – and to do this, you must grow a house from an egg! No one said that adventure plots had to be normal!

Having cured your sickness, you must now find a way down from the plateau you are on. The only way appears to be down, so you'll need a parachute. Oddly enough, they do grow on trees. From there, it's up to you. . .

The above is a series of hints to get you started on Level 9's latest adventure, past the initial problems and involved in the action. You must think for yourself, and puzzle things out. I don't want to spoil the game for you – but you won't get totally stumped.

For general hints, I suggest that you examine everything you find, especially the plant life. As I said, it isn't all it seems. You should also look at things from a different angle to normal. Just because something is called by one name doesn't mean it can't act as something else.

The puzzles in *Return To Eden* are very complex and involved. The adventure is split into sections which must be used to solve a problem to reach the next section. To get past each major section, you must solve at least five puzzles, or figure out uses for objects.

All the puzzles are extremely logical, and fit together well. You can sit for ages trying to work out what to do with the objects you have, and then it will click – you just use X and Y to get Z, and then Z and A to remove B!

Because of the complexity, there's an incredible feeling of achievement when you finally do get everything to click together.

Another feature of *Return To Eden* is the scoring. You get points for completing sections of the adventure, and lose them for dying. When you die, you don't finish the game, but are reborn in a human bean husk, to carry on with 100 less points. This happens at least three times. The perfect score is 1,000. It jumps in steps of 100 or so for each section completed.

There are a few annoying random features in the adventure, though they don't affect play as badly as some games. The area around the robot dome is patrolled by helicopter gunships, and these have an annoying tendency to shoot you just when you've nearly solved a problem. There's also a parrot which leaps out at you, grabs a valuable item and spirits it off to its nest. Shades of *Colossal Cave* there, I think.

The random features do mean that the adventure can't be the same every time you play. But it removes some of the skill element, replacing it with luck.

Compared with games such as *Sherlock* and *Valhalla*, *Return To Eden* is not a major step forward in adventure gaming. It builds on the standard text, two-word input, style of adventure game, with the addition of graphics.

Despite the few niggles I have about the random elements and slightly slow graphics, it's an excellent adventure. What Level 9 does, it does extremely well. □

You are beside a strategically
in a meadow of strange bright
flowers. A warm breeze wafts
gently through the long grass.
What now? E
You are on a huge mole-hill.
The ground is very soft.
What now?

strange plants on Eden.
There's an opening behind you.
What now? OUT
You are beside a strategically
in a meadow of strange bright
flowers. A warm breeze wafts
gently through the long grass.
What now?

ROCKET

Since *Loco* was released, Alligata has hardly put a foot wrong. Now *Rocket Roger* by Steve Evans is all that shoot 'em up fans would love. By Ian Boffin.

The central character of this game is Roger, who comes fully equipped with a neat backpack. . . oh, all right, then. . . jetpack. The basic idea is for him to refuel his stranded spaceship. This can be done only with the aid of crystals – ninety-nine of them, to be precise. The crystals are spread over the thirty square feet or so of the playield.

This playfield is what makes *Rocket Roger* such a special game. It is massive, deeply confusing, complex, and filled with unspeakable nasties. The fun of the game comes with exploring the dark depths of the play area.

Roger begins his quest for crystals beside his spaceship. First of all, he must negotiate cannons spewing out missiles, volcano fashion. There are four crystals in this first zone. But it is more important to pass them and explore further.

Flying in an eastern direction, Roger comes to the second zone. This presents him with rocks falling inadvertently from the sky. From here on, it is important to look for those handy transporter pads – T on the map. You should learn the locations of all these.

Then it's across into the third zone. This is easily the hardest of the three 'surface zones'. Your main foes are UFOs. It is very important to head for a transporter pad because the aliens will pin you down. And they will probably not give you a chance

to go down the thin mine shaft.

The stage beyond the mine shaft is the most complex and difficult section of the whole game. As soon as you fall down the shaft, it is very noticeable that you are in a man-made area. This bit I give the highly unoriginal title of "the crystal mines".

To your right is the fuel store. This is the ideal place to tot up on lost gallons.

Once you have refuelled, the best method is to clear the area entered from the first left turn after the shaft. This is where the pink bird patrols.

From there, try to collect every crystal in every explorable place. The only exception might be to not bother collecting the ones in the room with the laser barrier at the top.

SPECIFICATION

Name: Rocket Roger
Micro: Commodore 64
Price: £7.95
Software House: Alligata
Rating:
value★★★★
Graphics★★★
sound★★
satisfaction★★★★

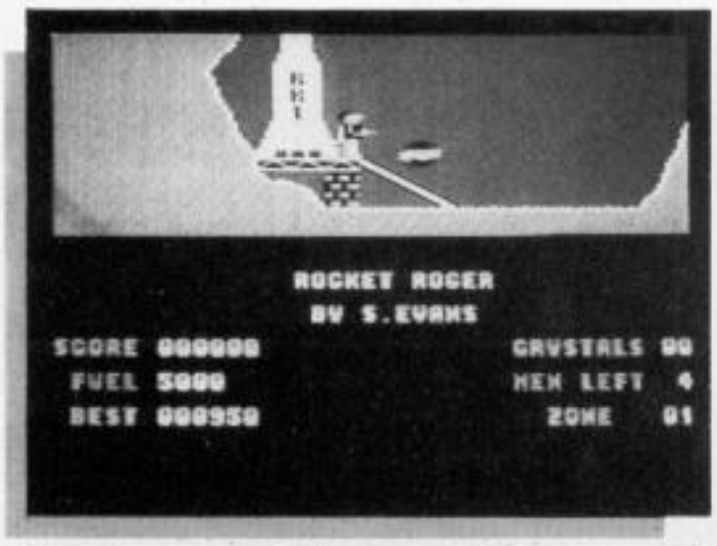
red rock fall is simply a case of timing. The blue one is very hard to traverse, because you must pick up all the crystals at the same time. You will lose quite a few lives here.

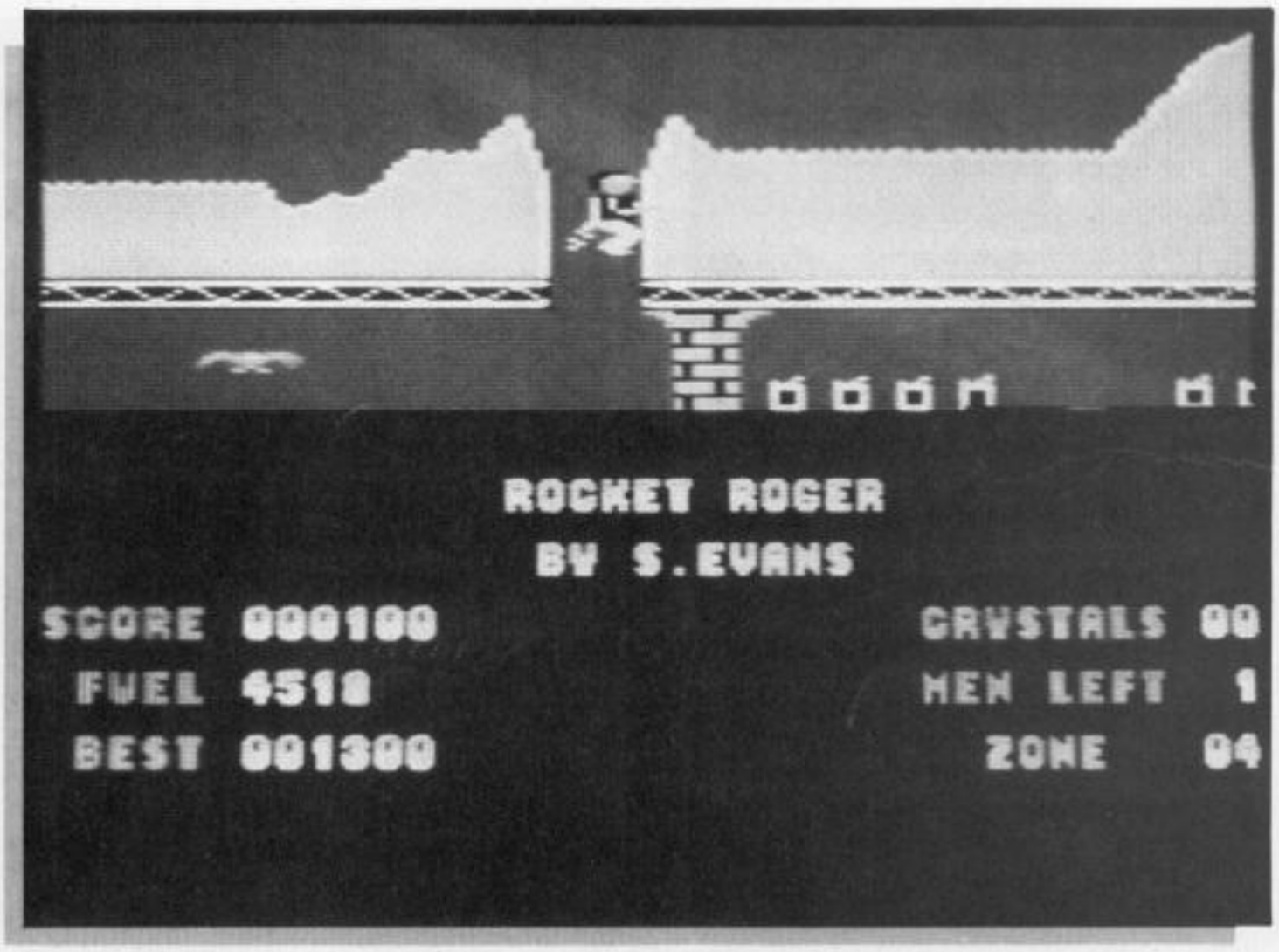
While rock falls can be shot, it is not usually advisable. It can mess them up a bit, and make them impassable.

The other two entrance/exits are in the rocket caverns and the space guppy caverns.

Back in the mines, more evil things are afoot! Most of the mines can be left to your own discretion. The main parts to watch out for are the areas filled with spikes and laser barriers. The most challenging part is reached by going down the ladder under the laser barrier next to the one leading to the lander room.

When you do come to this stage, remember that the small white bit of ceiling is a one-way door. Use it





When you are exploring, you should leave them.

Having slid down the slide, go right to where the laser barrier is, above the up ladder. Go there when the coast is clear. Collect both crystals in the lander room, marked L.

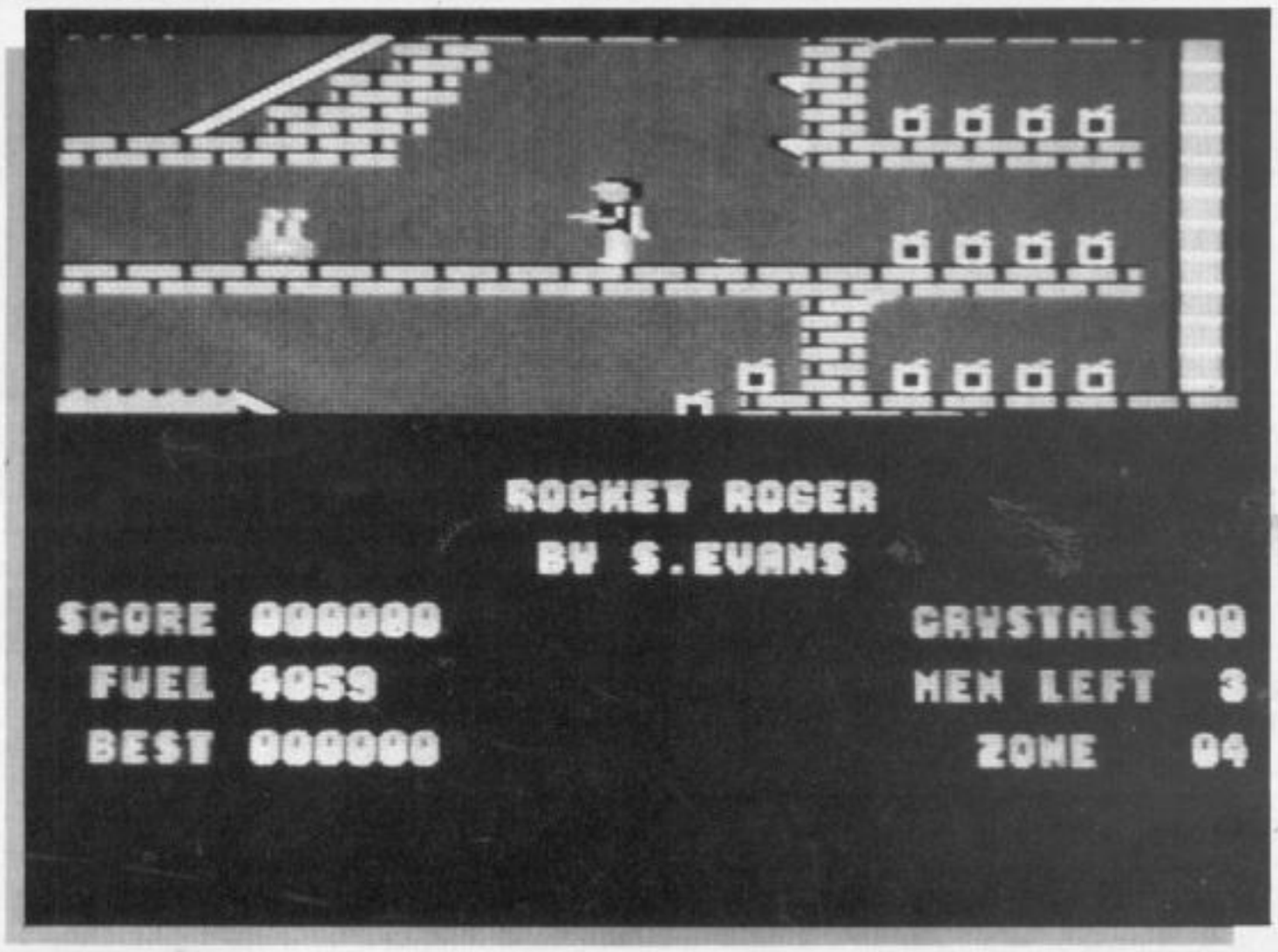
When you have cleared that room, go up and right. But beware of the guard who warps in there. To avoid him, thrust as soon as you enter the room. Pick up the fuel, and drop into the caverns.

The caverns are spacious in places. But they require the most delicate control. Of any alien variety in the caverns, a certain number must be killed to safely negotiate the jagged passages.

All the crystals in there are hidden in the walls and floors. So perfect use of thrust is needed. Whatever happens, you must never try to rush through the caverns. Each inch of the walls must be traversed precisely.

Every section of the caverns – except one – has an alien variety.

Two sections have rock falls. The



Left and top: Rocket Roger lands, blasts through falling rocks, and enters the mines. Above: a chance to fuel.

always, because it is even harder going back the way you came!

The other hardest stage has been nicknamed the maze. This is reached via the final third laser barrier. This is under the pair of lasers, just left of the robot mouse with arms that wave around a lot. Both speed and timing must be put to good use here.

At the end of the maze is a room which appears to be totally empty. When you enter it, a large purple alien appears. It must be killed about five times to make it safe to cross.

The room can also be crossed safely if you do it very quickly.

The next room is usually called the challenge chamber. In this room is one patrolling helicopter and four mini cubicles. Each has in it a form of challenge.

The first is to take a crystal and not touch a rocky mound. The second is to take another crystal while avoiding a collision with what appears to be a squat barrel – why it should want to kill me is beyond my imagination.

The third challenge is to do the same while avoiding being impaled on a spike. The final challenge welcomes back the laser barrier. Then you must get out again!

Another interesting feature of the mine is the firebomber room. This is excellent or scoring extra lives and achieving immense scores without doing all that much.

Just above that room is the only really notable feature of a complex but easy section at the top left of the mines. Apart from the usual patrol aliens, there is what the programmer calls a sliding door but is more like a guillotine. This is the only hard bit of this section.

Other things to be wary of are the rows of moving ladders, with spikes at the top and bottom. Avoid them.

The aliens. Nearly all the 'intelligent' aliens have come from the arcade machine *Stargate*. Some will be recognised from *Defender*. And one set looks like recognisers from *Tron*.

Landers fly fairly slowly, and appear in two areas. Only red ones fire at you.

Swarmers attack in packs, and also appear in two areas. Only the green ones will fire at you.

Firebombers are nasties which – thank goodness – appear in only one room. They look like round shapes spinning very quickly, and always throw out bullets.

Space guppies are devious, fast and hard to hit. They attack in threes until a set number have been destroyed. These menaces fortunately appear only in the left, large cavern.

Green/black nasties are similar in that they appear on either side of you when you are in the central room of three. This is reached after the hard battle with the long, lasered ceiling. The aliens are very hard to hit and shoot a lot. But there aren't too many of them.

Recognisers are not particularly violent, but they do get in the way frequently. There is a trick to clear the cavern they are in – but I'll let you find that out yourselves.

Rockets are in the upper middle cavern. They are not fast, but also get in the way. It is best to avoid them rather than destroy them.

The purple alien, as mentioned, appears only in the room before the challenge chamber. It spews out bullets at an unmentionable rate – but it is so enjoyable to kill.

Apart from these, there is the usual horde of nightmarish creatures. All are original.

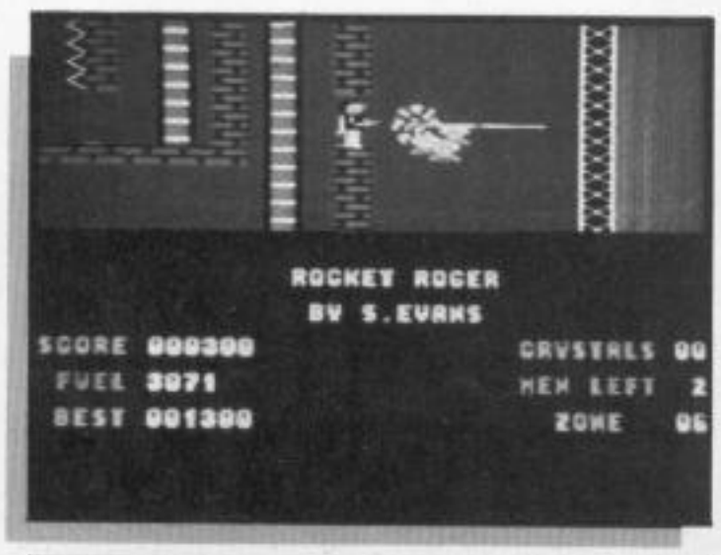
The main thing needed for mastery of *Rocket Roger* is a steady thrust finger. Your manipulation is all that stands between life and death. The use of the thrust must be worked at. It took me three days to start getting the hang of it.

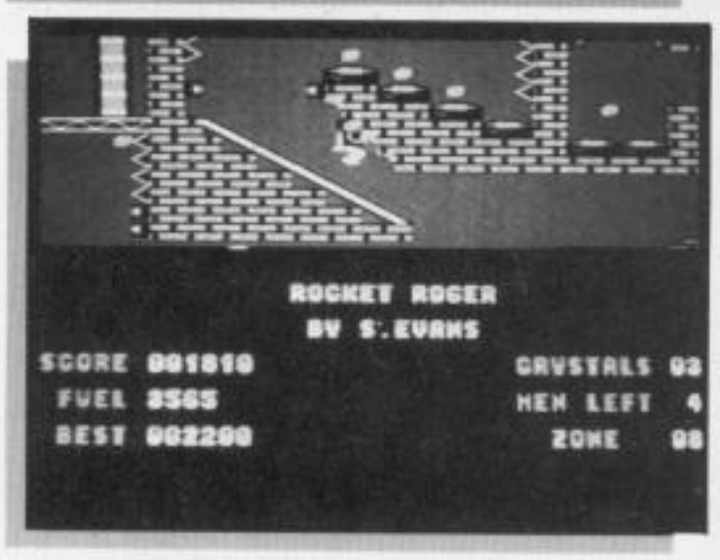
Once it is mastered, you must work out how to fire and thrust effectively at the same time. Fortunately, you also see your scores improve rapidly.

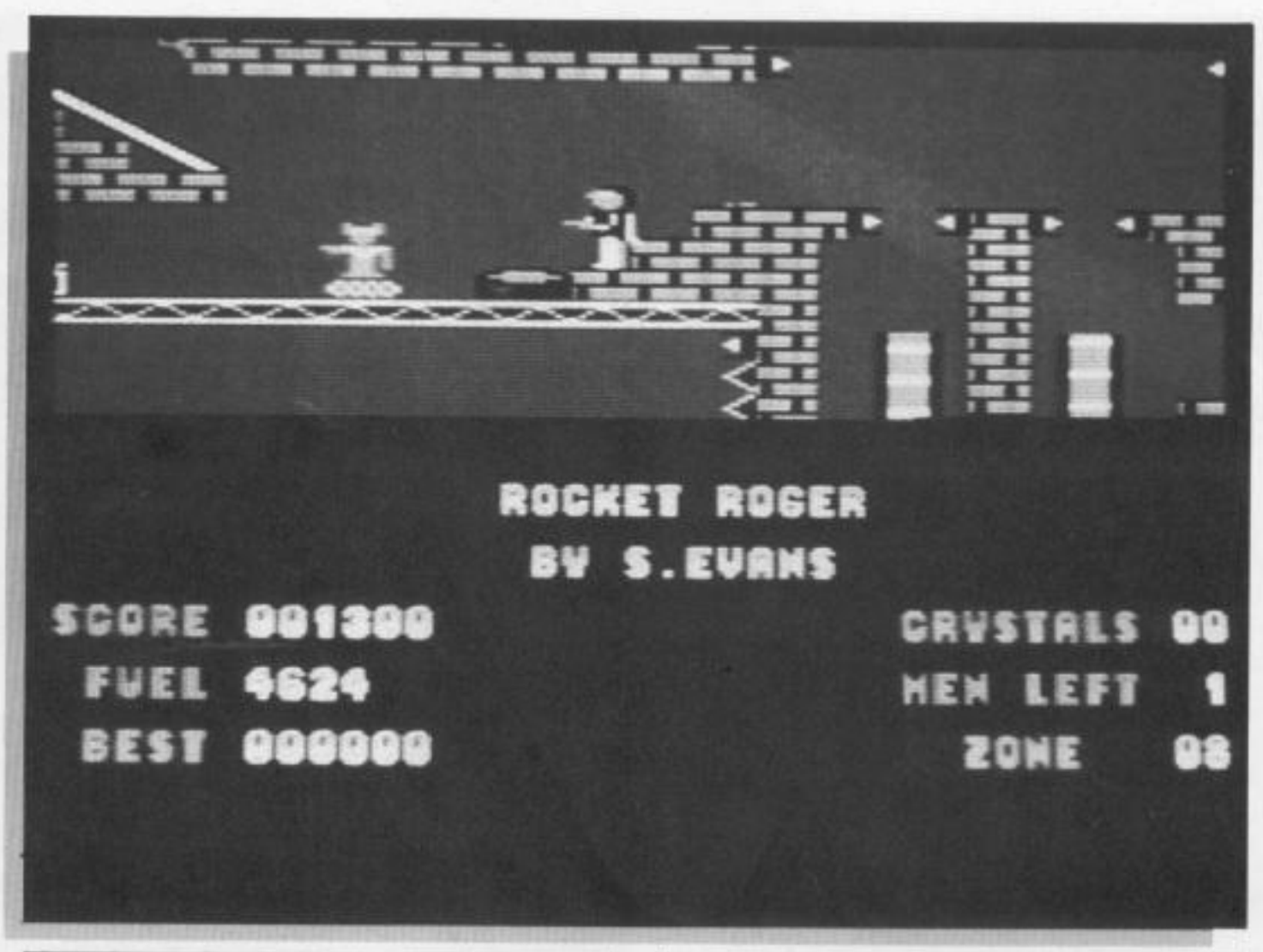
Apart from using the map, take heed of what programmer Steve Evans tells you to do. His hints are useful.

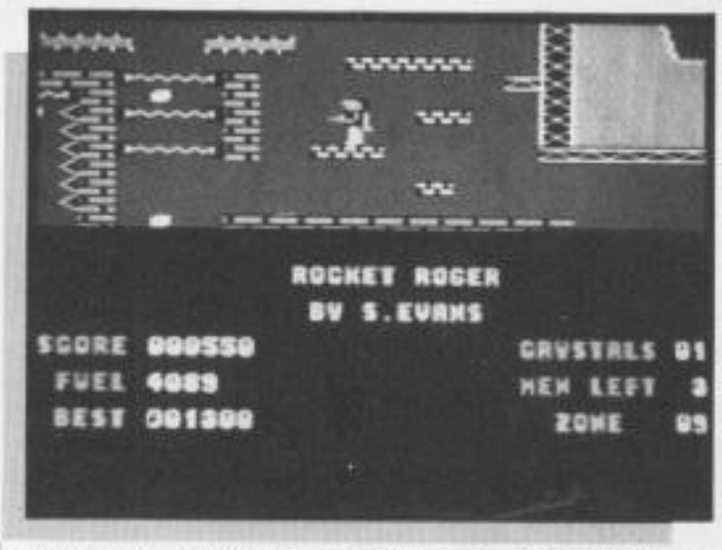
You may eventually get ninety-nine crystals. To give you something to try for, my highest score is 176,000 and fifty-eight crystals.

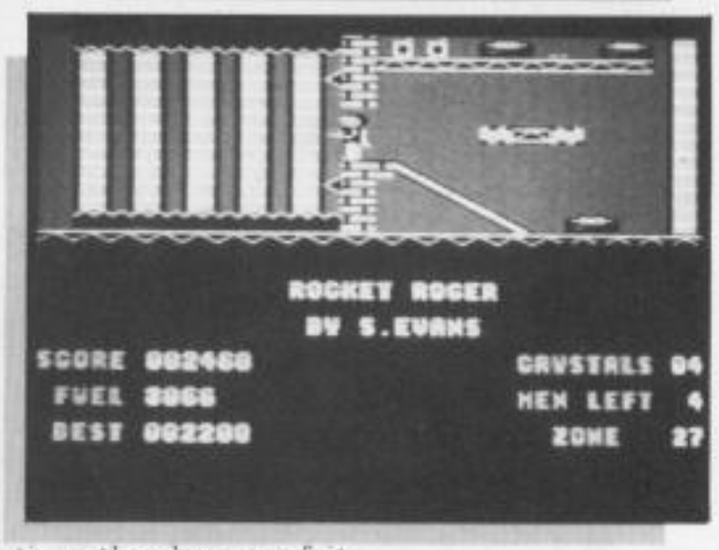
Finally, beware the dreaded zone chaser! □











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SPECIFICATION

Names: Tron, Discs Of Tron
Supplier: Bally Midway
Machine: arcade
Rating: value★★★
graphics★★★
sound★★★
satisfaction★★★★

The film *Tron* led to two popular arcade games: *Tron* and *Discs Of Tron*. Danny Pearson has spent long hours playing both. Here he describes the games and reveals to TVG readers how to defeat Sark and the master control program.

Above: gameplay for Tron is very obvious in this scene from the film. The towering column is the MCP cone; our hero prepares to throw the disc into it.

In this article, I will be looking at not one game, but two. The first *Tron* game came out just after the film of the same name. The second game, *Discs of Tron*, is based on the disc battles in the film.

Tron is four individual games in one flashy package. As in the film, the idea of the game is to survive as long as you can against the foes that the evil Sark and the master control program throw at you.

The game is controlled by a paddle and a *Gorf*-type joystick, probably because both games are made by Bally-Midway.

The four stages of the game are light cycle, tanks, MCP cone, and spiders.

The light cycle game was played in the film. The aim is to surround the computer-controlled opponent until he has no alternative but to crash into one of your jetwalls. This is by no means easy, as in the later waves you take on three of the computer's bikes.

The tank stage is played in the memory circuits of the MCP, or master control program. You must shoot the other tanks in the maze of circuits before you can move to the next stage. To destroy a tank, you must shoot it three times. But if one of the tanks shoots you, you will die immediately.

This game is controlled by both the paddle and joystick. The joystick moves the tank, and the paddle rotates the gun turret.

In the centre of the maze is a purple diamond. If you try to enter this, you will disappear and reappear somewhere else in the maze. It's a bit like hyperspace.

The MCP cone stage is very similar to *Breakout*. Tron is standing at the bottom of a cone. There are some bricks rotating around the top. You must shoot a gap so that Tron can walk through. Once through, you get 1,000 points. If you manage to shoot all the bricks, you will get another 1,000 points.

The aim of the spider game is to enter the round circle in the centre of the screen. It sounds easy, but there's a small problem. There are several spiders, all intent on killing you. You will be de-resed if one touches you. For those TVG readers who haven't seen the film, de-resed (pronounced de-rezzed) means de-resolutioned means dead.

The control for both the MCP cone and the spiders are identical. The joystick moves Tron, and the paddle rotates his arm.

Now that you have the general idea of the gameplay, let's look at the separate waves.

Wave one. After inserting your coin(s), you see a picture of a circuit board. It is split into four colours. Each colour represents a different game. But this doesn't help you choose, as they are randomly placed.

The light cycle screen is very easy in the first wave. There is only one opponent and, with a pattern, you should have no trouble.

Then the opponent can't get out, and will crash.

The tanks are even easier than the light cycles. Again, there is only one opponent. Go first to the centre of the maze where the purple diamond resides. Next, rotate the gun so that it is facing down.

By this time, the computer's tank will be trundling towards the diamond. He can't fire through the diamond – but you can. So all you need do is fire three times.

The MCP cone is more difficult than the light cycles or tanks. But if you do it right, you should have no trouble.

First, rotate the arm so that it is facing up. Then go to the top left of the cone. Stop just before you hit a brick. Fire constantly, moving down every so often to avoid hitting a brick.

The spiders start with only three in number. But each can split into four separate spiders – and four again if you don't shoot quickly enough. You have only a very short time to get into the circle, so move fast.

Wave two. The light cycles are, not surprisingly, harder than in the first wave. This time, there are three of them and they are faster. But again there is an easy pattern to deal with them.

The tank scene now contains three tanks. These are best shot from a distance to give you time to avoid the shots they will direct at you.

If you watch the tanks, you will see that they follow a predetermined path. Learn these patterns, and you will have no trouble with the tanks.

The spiders are much more difficult than on wave one. There are

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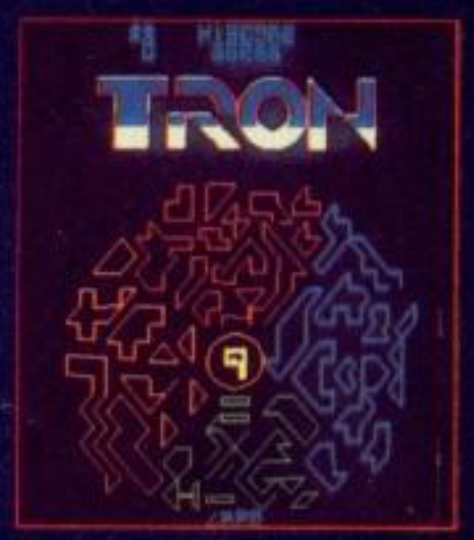
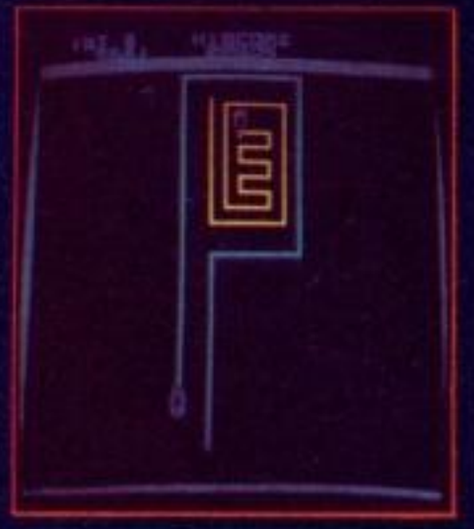
TRON

TRAPPED IN A FIGHT
TO THE FINISH
INSIDE THE VIDEO WORLD
HE CREATED

WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS





PHOTOGRAPHS: PHILIP DE-ASHA

well over twenty of them, and they continue to multiply.

To deal with them, you must choose to enter the circle from left or right. Then raise your arm so that it's facing up, and blast a path through the spiders.

Once you're outside the entrance, rotate the arm up and down, and shoot the spiders for points. Just before the timer runs out, run into the circle.

The only difference between the MCP cone in waves one and two is that you have four rows of bricks instead of three. All you need do is go to the top right and fire. For some reason, you can fire faster than in wave one, which makes things a little bit easier.

Wave three. For the light cycles, I must confess that I haven't found a pattern that works all the time. But I have been able to view one that does work.

The tanks are now very hard – there are seven of them. The best thing to do is to go to the top right corner of the maze, and shoot at another wall so that the bullet ricochets off it. If you don't, you won't have much chance of surviving.

In the MCP cone game, you must forget about the 1,000 points for clearing all the bricks. The cone scrolls so fast that you haven't a chance in – well, Tron I suppose.

Your best bet is to go to the top left of the cone, and shoot a hole just big enough for Tron to run through.

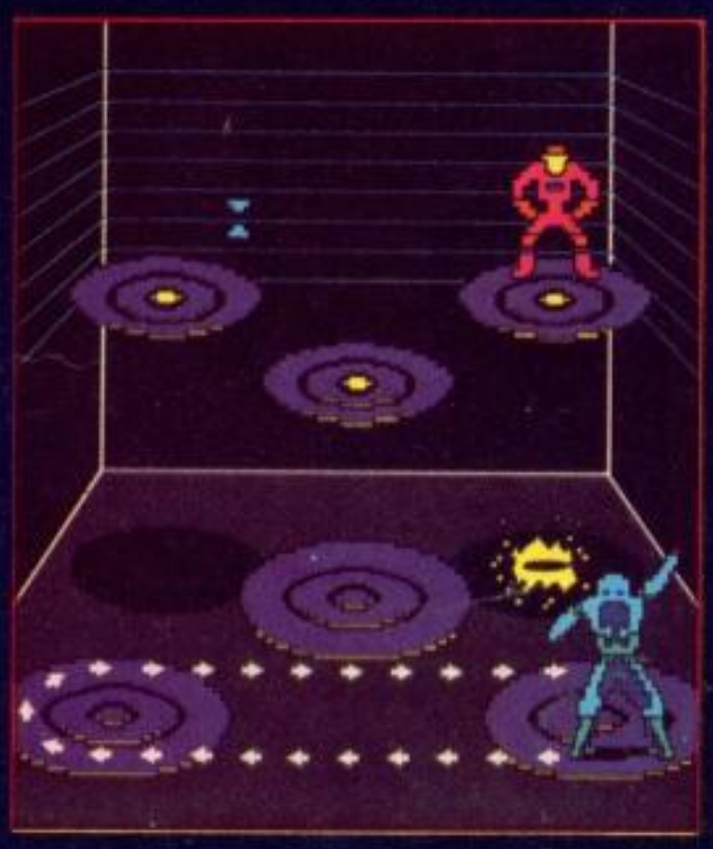
The spiders are in two long lines across the screen. The best advice I can give is for you to go left and shoot like hell until you create a gap big enough for Tron to fit through. Then stand outside the entrance and shoot the spiders under you.

Later waves. The next waves are similar to wave three except for two things.

The first is a character called Bit who appears in the spiders' screen. If you run over him, you get a meaty 5,000 points bonus.

The second is that, in wave five, there are no tanks in the tank screen. Instead, there are red 'recognisers'. Unlike tanks, they don't fire bullets at you. To make up for this, they are very fast. Just a touch from one will kill you.

Another twist in the game is that you can continue a game after you die by putting more money in the machine. This can help you learn the pattern of the bikes and tanks, and you can work out some new strategies.



Above: *a scene from Discs Of Tron. Sark has unleashed his deadliest weapon – a fireball with orbiting discs. You have only one deflector left.*

You can survive this scene! Make ovals as large as you can around the slowly pursuing fireball. Each time you pass in front of it, throw a disc into it by lining up your cursor on the opposite wall. In this way, you can gradually wear it down.

Discs Of Tron is the second *Tron* game, based on the disc battle in the film. The aim is to stay alive by not being de-resed three times. The game starts with a voice telling you that you have been selected for battle by the MCP.

The game is set on two rings in the centre of a cube. You and a warrior stand on each of the two rings. You must battle it out to the death.

The controls are the same as in the first *Tron* game: a paddle and a joystick. The joystick moves Tron left, right, and over the gap between the rings. On top of the joystick is another button used for deflecting incoming discs. The paddle is used to control a cursor that goes around the cube you're in.

Gameplay. Tron is standing on a ring. Another warrior is at the other end of the cube. Suddenly, he starts hurling discs at you, which you can dodge or deflect. If one of your discs strikes home, the opposing warrior is de-resed.

Before you can get your breath back, another warrior appears and fires. You must deflect his disc. Too late, and you will be de-resed. A hidden voice laughs at you. The gameplay is hard.

Later stages. If you survive a little while, another ring appears. You can jump from ring to ring by just moving from left to right.

If you get even further into the game, a deflector shield will appear in front of the other warrior. To shoot him, your shots must bounce off another side of the cube.

I prefer the original game, but *The Discs Of Tron* has improved sound and graphics. □

D·A·V·E R·A·V·E·S·!

Cousin Reggie has been known to pull the odd surprise. But last Christmas he overdid it. Using his ingenious door-opening device – a very large club joined to a mallet, with a large tack through the middle – he visited David Harvey at 7am.

PHOTOGRAPHS: PHILIP DE-ASHA

"Just as I open the door, Reggie lunges forward with said ingenious device, and I get a nasty crack on the head. 7am on Christmas morning – and already I need a lie-down.

I go upstairs to the bathroom to have a winter clean – well, it's not spring – and spend hours chasing a daddy longlegs around the room. Then I realise it's a crack in my glasses, and slip on a bar of soap.

I return downstair, to the kitchen, to find Reggie finishing a large plate of bacon and eggs. "Where's mine?" I ask. Reggie points to his stomach with a grin on his face wide enough to slot a banana in sideways.

My mind can't help but wander back to the time I read a book called *How To Get Rid Of Unwanted Pests*. Spraying Reggie with a goodly quantity of green fly deterrent didn't seem to do the trick. In fact, it aggravated him so much that he reached for his ingenious device and started chasing me.

I ran, rushing to find something to defend myself with from the manic fiend. All I saw was the hoover – better than nothing.

I picked it up by the long trunk and swung it to ward off Reggie. But he picked up the detergent to seek revenge. It was time to make myself scarce, so I ran out of the front door.

As soon as I got outside, I saw a police car. Great! If I could only get near it, Reggie wouldn't bother me. I ran after the car, making loud noises to attract the policemen's attention.

As I ran, I looked over my shoulder – to see the Dave Towers neighbours with a v. odd look on their faces.

"'ere, Gladys."

"Yes, Beryl."

"I think the Harvey and his boozy mates have been at it already."

"Why, what's he doing?"

"He's making funny warp noises."

"So what else is new?"

"Well, Gladys, he's chasing a police car along the road, swinging the vacuum cleaner round his head. And there's a boozy mate running after him with a club and a bottle of insect deterrent shouting 'I'm not a greenfly'."

"Oh."

"Oh."

We managed to get to noon without any more fracas. "It's present-opening time," Reggie declares. Last year, he gave me a one-way ticket to Australia and a kangaroo peeler. So this year I gave him a frog repair kit and a copy of my latest book, *101 Things To Do With Reginald Sole, a freezer and a bass guitar*. After carefully scrutinising these items, he rams them down my throat.

Now my turn to open my present. I arm myself with a smartbomb, just in case of difficulties. On examining the parcel, it seems to be Tasmanian shaped. Uh-ho. Yours truly wearily undoes the wrapping, to find an ale-making kit. Not bad! But then Reggie stuffed it down my throat.

Time goes by, dinner goes by, Reggie has too much.

Only a few hours of Christmas day left. All the merry banter of Christmas games is over – Reggie plays Pass The Parcel Bomb and Musical Electrical Chairs.

7pm. Time for drinky-poos (lunchtime was only a warm-up). To cut a long story short – or is that the editor's job? – by about 10pm, Reggie's as a newt. Nutcase time.

When Reggie's in this state, his one aim in life is to make as much noise as possible. He plugs on the computer, speech unit and synthesiser – at maximum volume. He grabs his ingenious device, and runs out of the house. Just as he goes, he catches his shirt on a nail with Christmas decorations – he's shirtless, trailing green tinsel.

Reggie runs out on the road, unaware, and starts clubbing motor vehicles, shouting "I'm an apple-flavoured Donkey Kong". Reggie, stop! EE OR EE OR EE OR. . . no, not a donkey. . . a police car.

This is where I come on the scene.

"Gladys."

"Yes, Beryl."

"Come and have a look at this."

"What is it?"

"You know that Harvey fellow?"

"Yes."

"Well, you ought to see what he and his boozy mate are up to."

"What?"

"His boozy mate's running around with no shirt like the green hulk, a policeman's helmet on his head, and a club in his hand, shouting something about being an apple-flavoured donkey. And the Harvey is running across the green waving a shirt with two cops chasing him."

"Oh."

"'ere, Gladys."

"Yeah."

"They've left the front door open, bleedin' din. . . fancy watching TV?"

"Yeah, alright." □

PUNCHY
Micro: Amstrad CPC464
Price: £8.95
Software house: Amsoft
Type of game: arcade

Punchy is another of the Hunchback genre of games. The difference is that *Punchy* is based on a Punch and Judy show.

You are PC Bobby and must save Judy from the evil Punch – and overcome all dangers.

The game has a nice feature in which, if you collect three sausages thrown by Judy, you can transport yourself to the next screen. The problem is that the sausages are a bit difficult to catch.

There is a time limit per screen, and a bonus for completing each of the six screens unharmed. The game is fun and challenging, made more enjoyable by the above average use of graphics.

Punchy loads extremely fast, and there is a high-score table.

ANDREW MARSHALL

Value ★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★★

January Reviews

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To make things easier for our readers, above is a list of the pages on which you will find reviews of games for your micro. NOTE: most games are being converted to run on popular micros, and new games are being released in multi-format.

PACMANIA
Micro: Commodore 64
Price: £5.95
Software house: Mr Chip
Type of game: maze

Superb! That's the only way to describe this *Pac-Man* game.

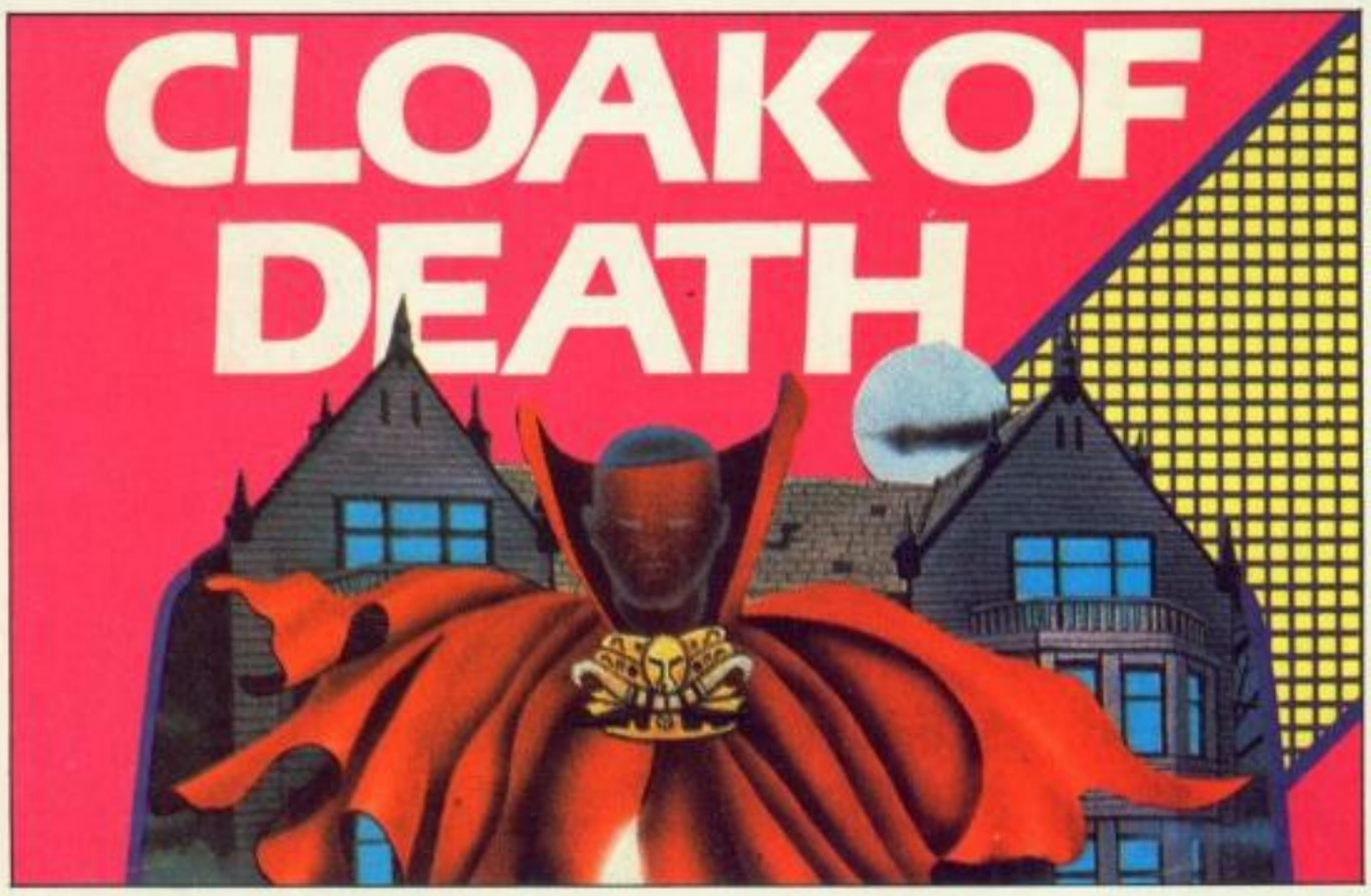
At first, I thought it would be just another boring maze game where some moronic yellow ball was rushing round a maze being chased by four weird blobs or "ghosts". But when it loaded I was very pleased.

This is an exact replica of the arcade game, in both sound and graphics. The ghosts were the most intelligent I've seen in this type of game.

If you liked the arcade original, you'll love this. Even if you didn't, I'd recommend *Pacmania* because of the low price. Fruit, power pellets, that cute yellow muncher and a new teleport feature all make this a superb game.

LEE BRAITHWAITE

Value ★★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★★★★ Satisfaction ★★★★



CLOAK OF DEATH
Micro: Atari 32K, CBM 64, Spectrum
Price: £7.99
Software house: Argus Press
Author: David Cockram
Type of game: graphic adventure

Cue creepy music, creaking doors, lightning flashes and loud rumbling thunder. We've got a "spine-chilling, blood-curdling game featuring state-of-the-art multi-screen graphics in the goriest detail".

Or so says the blurb on the inlay card of *Cloak Of Death*. I played the Atari version and think the game should win an award. Not for outstanding gameplay or graphics, but for one of the corniest titles I've heard.

Seriously, it's not that bad. It's a basic escape-from-the-haunted-house adventure. Why go into a haunted house in the first place? I have the answer: you were stoned at the time. "Strange what bets you'll accept after a few pints in the local," the blurb says. So you stay a night in the major's old house.

The display is in a split-screen format. The top half is used for the graphics, and the bottom for text. There is also an option to turn off the graphics.

Despite the game being written in Basic, it has an almost instantaneous response time, and the graphics are drawn in under five seconds. Looking at the listing will give you one or two clues, but you will have to reload if you want to play again.

You start your intrepid escape attempt at the bottom of a staircase – which you can't climb until you've been to another room. This is because "it looks too creepy". In this room is a rat. I tried to kill it, but it took an immediate dislike to my actions and promptly killed me.

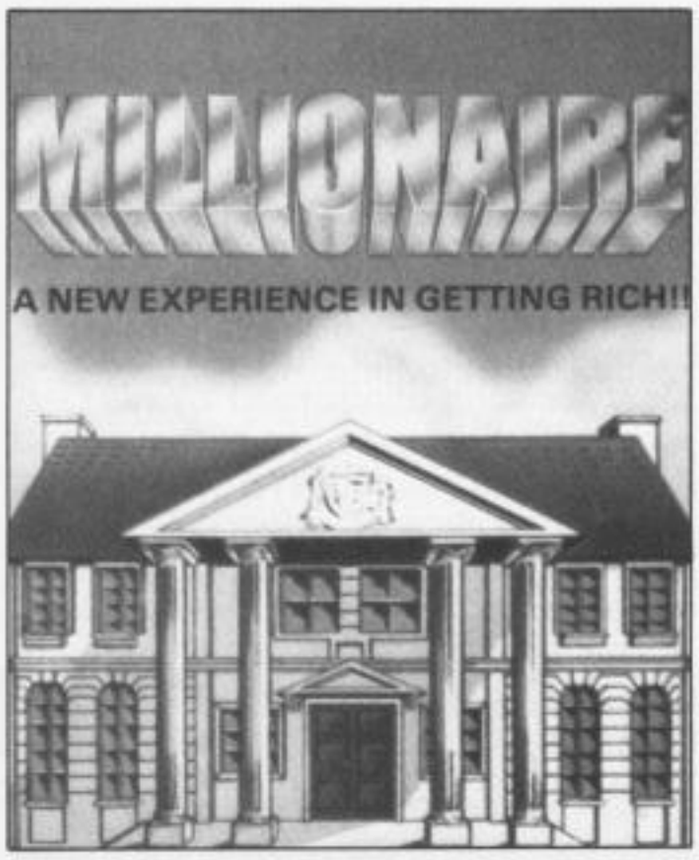
So I restarted, and had a look around. I found a carving knife, and returned to the rat room. "Right, I'll get you this time, you little ★£!Œ@," I thought. Alas, I suffered the same fate as before.

One thing I didn't like was that you could recall the room description only by dropping or picking up an object. The only way you can discover things is by LOOKing or EXAMining.

If you want an adventure that is a bit more brain taxing, I would recommend a Level 9 game. But *Cloak Of Death* is good fun and probably ideal for the novice.

JAMIE GLADDEN

Value ★★★ Graphics ★★
Sound — Satisfaction ★★★



MILLIONAIRE
Micro: BBC, Electron
Price: £7.95
Software house: Incentive
Authors: John Hunt, Steve Benfield
Type of game: strategy

Who wants to be a millionaire? I would! So drag yourself away from your micro, tune in and read on.

You have written a program which you consider to be good enough to market, and are willing to put £500 of your own money into the project. You must start up a software company, buy, sell and advertise to reach your ultimate goal.

The first thing you must do is to decide which type of game you want to specialise in. The subjects you can choose range from arcade to educational games. Put your mark on which sections you think are the most important. These are:

a) a well-written program
b) a well-presented idea
c) original ideas
d) should maintain interest.

The marks you give range from one to eight; your total for sections must add up to twenty. The marks are important for sales.

You are then presented with a graphic representation of the offices belonging to your company. These don't knock you off the back of your chair, but they become more impressive as your assets grow.

You can sell your program to companies which have rather strange names. One which made me laugh was Zap Em Of Clapham!

You must also deal with Honest Harry. One typical comment he made to me was "Listen, guv! I've got these five programs you might like. It's all good stuff. How about, say, £750 for the lot?". Unfortunately, Harry doesn't live up to his name. If you agree to buy the goods from him, you normally end up on the wrong side of the law.

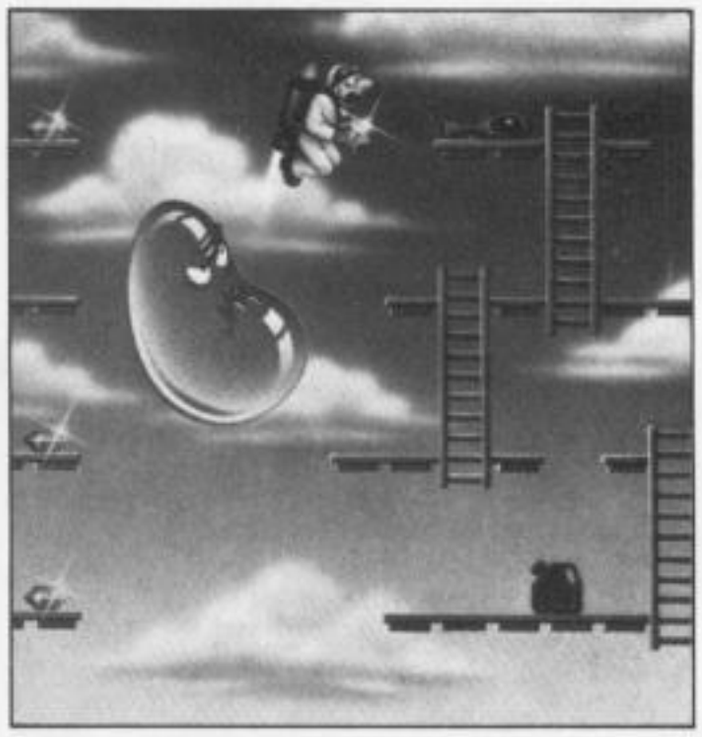
There is also a bar chart showing your sales throughout the year, a news page and other information on advertising. If you have had enough, and want to see how well you've done, you can sell out. A score sheet shows your total assets, selling price, time in business, popularity rating – mine was always 0%, sob, sob – and your score.

If your assets reach £100 or lower, you will be considered bankrupt.

The program is well presented and written, but it didn't hold my interest for long. Maybe I'm an arcade action freak, but a lot of people who enjoyed *Football Manager* may go for this game.

RICHARD WHITE

Value ★★★ Graphics ★★
Sound ★★ Satisfaction ★★★



ROCKET MAN
Micro: ZX-81
Software house: Software Farm
Type of game: platform

In the days of old when a ZX-81 was bold, a game with sophistication did not exist. But now Software Farm has taken the old black magic box and made an excellent game: *Rocket Man*.

The opening screen graphics are wonderful for this machine, with a greeting from the cosmic cockerel and a very short piece on controls.

The object of the game is to guide our hero over to the diamonds which lie innocently on small platforms on the left side of the screen.

Getting the diamonds is another matter. From the depths of the sea comes a rather strange monster shaped as a sapphire and affectionately called Bubloid. He's so keen to take you down to the depths that he'll do anything.

Our hero must rush around a set of platforms, going up and down ladders to get cans of fuel to power a rocket backpack. With this he flies to rewards.

As the game progresses, you must find legs of lamb to feed your pet vulture.

Anything can happen – and does – in this game. You could run out of fuel, which means meeting with Bubloid sooner than you would like.

One excellent feature is the jump button. You can go for miles if you keep the pressure on long enough.

For every 10,000 points you manage to get, you gain an extra life. You start with three.

For anyone who owns a ZX-81, I recommend this game very highly.

STEPHEN SIGLEY

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★ Satisfaction ★★★★★

NEW YORK BLITZ
Micro: Vic 20
Price: £1.99
Software house: Mastertronic
Type of game: skill

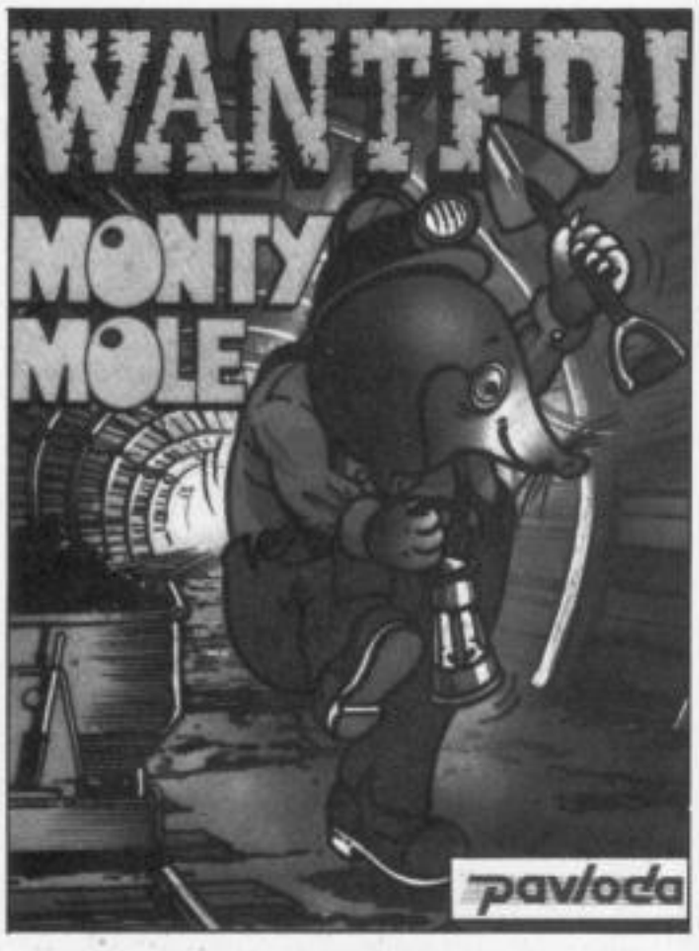
This game should be familiar to all Vic owners, as it is virtually identical to Commodore's *Blitz*.

New York Blitz puts you in the unhappy position of flying at a low altitude – to discover that you've run out of fuel. To make a 'safe' crash landing, you must flatten the city below.

The game is not complex, so soon becomes boring. It's not saved by graphics or sound. £1.99 is all I would pay for this piece of software.

LEE MALLINDER

Value ★★★ Graphics ★★
Sound ★★ Satisfaction ★



MONTY MOLE
Micro: Commodore 64
Price: £7.95
Software house: Gremlin Graphics
Author: Tony Crowther
Type of game: platform

Gremlin Graphics has managed to produce yet another excellent game – this time in the form of *Monty Mole*.

With a long, cold winter and bone-chilling Christmas ahead, Monty makes a daring coal-snatching raid to his local South Yorkshire pit. He soon regrets it.

The mine is definitely unfriendly. Our hero is attacked by many types of monsters. These are only half the story! The mine is a massive underground obstacle course, featuring coal crushers, ladders, drainpipes, trolley, acid pools and arrows – the list is nearly endless.

Monty also has limited energy, which can be replaced by a box of worms.

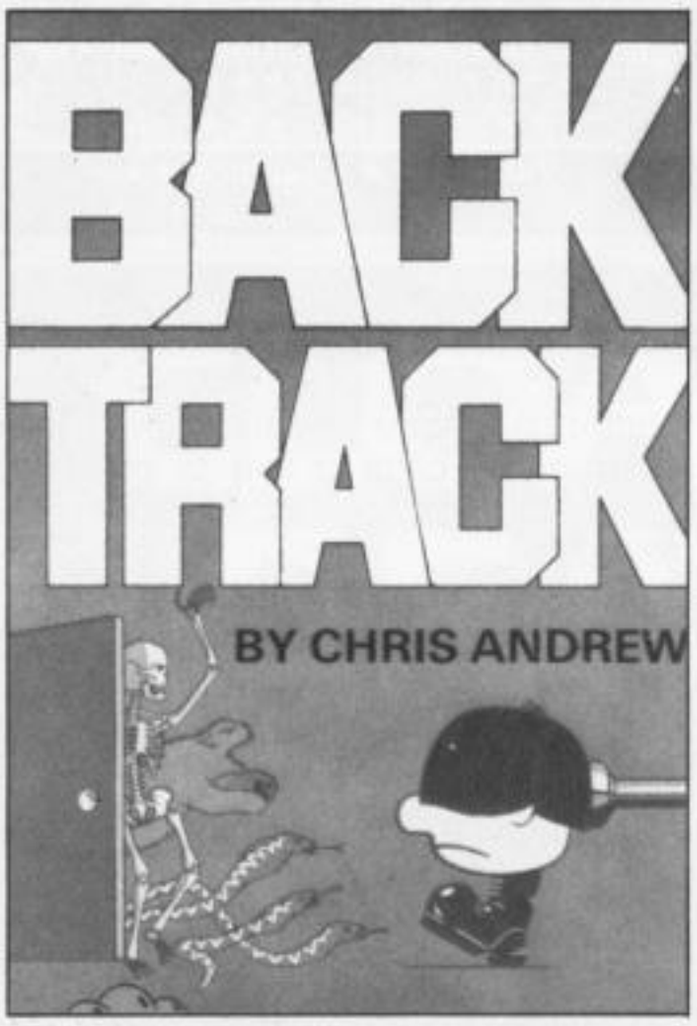
After collecting the coal, Monty escapes – to emerge in Arthur Scargill's castle. Seizing his only chance of toppling him, Monty collects the secret ballot papers and vote-casting scroll. But Arthur's no fool. Monty is soon confronted by his personal bodyguard of pickets and deadly flying hairsprays.

The graphics in *Monty Mole* are not spectacular, but that's only to be expected from a game this complex.

The sound was repetitive, and a tune played throughout. But overall it's a compulsive game that will keep you going for many an hour.

MICHAEL BOYCE

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★★★★



BACKTRACK
Micro: Dragon 32/64
Price: £6.50

Software house: Incentive
Author: Chris Andrew
Type of game: maze

This is a 3D maze game with a difference. The angle from which you view the maze is changed. Instead of the usual view of the corridors stretching out in front of you, the player sees a representation of the room from above in three dimensions.

The object of the game is to complete five tests in which Eddie must be guided round the maze. He must find keys to unlock the door to the exit.

A number of things slow Eddie's progress. Not least of these is the fact that he must pick up the keys in numerical order.

Eddie must also beware of snakes in some rooms. He must pass these when they are looking the other way.

A red column on the left of the screen shows Eddie's willpower, which is slowly drained as he roams. When it runs out, he spins round and falls flat on his back. Seeing a skeleton detracts from willpower, and finding fruit replenishes it.

On completing a test, some neat graphics show Eddie coming out of the exit and jumping up and down – only to be pushed back into a larger maze with more keys to find.

On completing the last test, you must watch what Eddie does and fill in the competition card which comes with the game. Five people who have finished test five will go into a playoff to win a Cumana disc drive.

This is a well-produced game with graphics normally seen on more expensive computers. The scrolling as Eddie walks from room to room is particularly smooth. Other nice features include the ability to define your own keys to control Eddie and a table of the best times on each test. Sound is sparingly used, but is effective in places.

Backtrack is a refreshing change from blasting nasties from outer space.

CHRIS WISEMAN

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★★★★

FRANK N STEIN
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £5.95
Software house: PSS
Author: Colin Stewart
Type of game: climbing/skill

When you first hear the title of this game, you may think "not another adventure". But it is far from an adventure; it's a *Manic Miner*-type. It knocks spots off miner Willy.

The aim of the game is to help Professor FN Stein achieve his life's ambition, to create the Frank N Stein monster. You must guide Frank around the dungeon to pick up all the bones in the correct order. Snails, bats, ice and tanks – to list but a few – are out to hinder you. And there's a time limit.

Fifty sheets must be completed, with a mere three lives. Don't miss this game.

NICHOLAS WAKEMAN

Value ★★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★ Satisfaction ★★★★★

HYPERACTION
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £5.95
Software house: Silversoft
Type of game: platform

When you read this, stocks of *Hyperaction* will have reached your local retailer. . . buy it!

I cannot recommend this game enough. It has that elusive playability that so many games lack. Based on a simple idea, *Hyperaction* unfolds into a suberbly addictive, compulsive and frustrating machine code game.

From the blurb on the cassette inlay, this game sounds like another *Manic Miner* clone. True, you must collect the objects to be transported to the next level, but that's where the similarity ends.

The spider you control has several adversaries. On the first screen, his pursuers come in the guise of Pac men. On the second, they appear as jelly fish.

As is the rage now, each screen has an individual title. Some of these are quite amusing – "the return of the jelli" is one.

The spider has a helpful power. He can push squares of the screen around. This power can be used to trap your enemies and score points. On alternate screens, you must fill in the background while avoiding your assailants.

The graphics in *Hyperaction* are eyecatching, and the colours are very bright.

A very good game, highly recommended.

GARY BUSS

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★★★

SIR LANCELOT
Micro: Spectrum 16K, 48K
Price: £6.95
Software house: Melbourne House
Type of game: platform

This is not an original idea, but it is well done and very addictive.

You take the role of Sir Lancelot, whose quest is to recover the holy grail. To do this, you must investigate the twenty-four rooms of a castle, collecting useful items along the way. Once you have cleared a screen of these items, an exit to the next room will be revealed.

The castle is populated with assorted nasties, such as birds, dogs, knights and walking cauldrons. Contact with any of these results in the loss of one of your four lives.

Lancelot is manoeuvred about the screen with left, right and jump buttons.

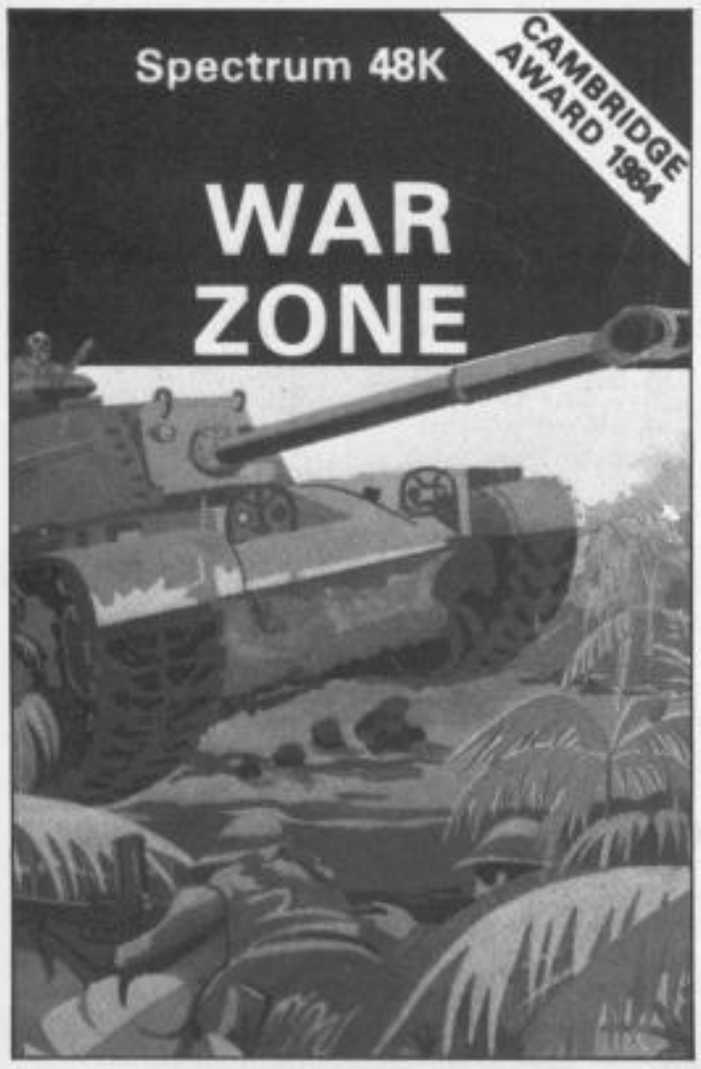
Moving stairways connect different parts of the room. But beware! Once climbed, more often than not there is no way down. This makes it important to evolve a strategy for completing each screen. Since you are on a time limit, it may take several attempts to do this.

The graphics, while not original, are up to standard for this type of game. Sound is fairly good and the keys are easy to use. One thing that would have enhanced *Sir Lancelot* would have been the option to continue when all your lives expire. As it is, you must restart from location one.

Good platform games are practically nonexistent for the 16K Spectrum, so Sir Lancelot is good news for those owners.

P SERBERT

Value ★★★ Graphics ★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★★★



WARZONE
Micro: Amstrad CPC464, Spectrum
Price: £6.95, £5.95 respectively
Software house: Cases Computer Simulation
Type of game: war strategy

Warzone is a game in which you must occupy your opponent's base, defeating armies on the way.

There are three types of "pieces": artillery, infantry and tanks. You can choose between fifteen and 150.

There are nine sectors, but you can see only those sectors in which you have pieces. Movement is determined by the terrain: plainland, roads, hills or woodland.

You can fire at your opponent's pieces, with artillery having a longer range than tanks. But if you miss, the fire is returned.

You can't fire into woodland, and you have a longer range if you shoot from a hill top.

Fighting breaks out when two opposing armies are on adjacent squares. All hand-to-hand combat is fought straight away until death. Movement stops after combat.

The attacker has a small advantage, which is reduced as battle continues.

Air attack can be used once per go to attack any square in a sector containing blue pieces. It ends your go.

The screen in *Warzone* is split into three: the displayed sector; sector map, compass, troops remaining; and command messages.

Overall, this is a good game – but patience is needed when the computer takes its go.

The graphics are good, with well-designed characters. The sound is average. Air attack, firing and hand-to-hand combat have sound with flashing borders.

CHRISTOPHER BULLETT

Value ★★ Graphics ★★★
Sound ★★ Satisfaction ★★

EDDIE KIDD JUMP CHALLENGE
Micro: BBC, Commodore 64, Electron, Spectrum
Price: £6.95 (Spectrum) £7.95 (others)
Software house: Martech
Type of game: bike

Jump Challenge is a highly original game. You take the role of Eddie Kidd who shattered the world record when he was eighteen with a leap of 190 feet – clearing fourteen double-decker buses.

First, you must jump barrels on a BMX bike. This is easy as all you need do is accelerate as fast as you can.

Then you move onto motorbikes, jumping over cars. This is much harder, as you must get the landing angle right. If you pull back too far, you flip over and your go ends. If you don't pull back far enough, you do a nose dive and lose the game.

Another added difficulty is the wind. The direction is shown by a windsock at the bottom of the screen.

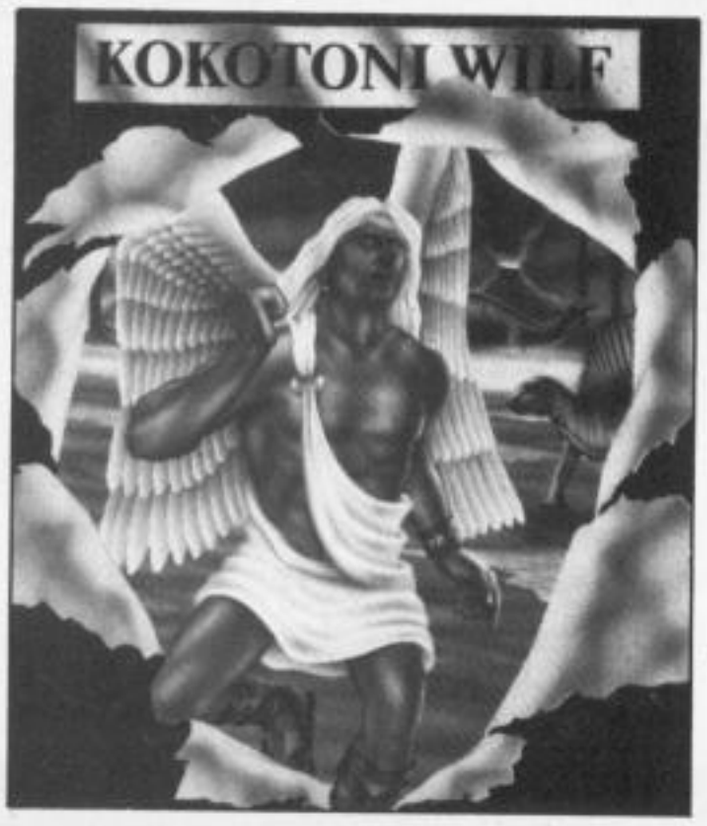
The only annoying thing about this game is that you can't miss out the BMX stage. I found it just a waste of time.

The graphics on the bike and Eddie are good, but the background could be improved, as it has only some clouds and a fence. The sound is quite good, considering the limitations of the Spectrum.

Gameplay is very good, but one or two different screens could make this game better. Nice try!

J TIMPERLEY

Value ★★★ Graphics ★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★★★



KOKOTONI WILF
Micro: Commodore 64, Spectrum
Price: £6.95, £5.95 respectively
Software house: Elite
Author: Andy Williams
Type of game: maze/adventure

Kokotoni Wilf is a very good adventure game. It follows in the paths of both *Alchemist* and Atic Atac. A great magician callled Ulrich discovered a legendary dragon amulet. Fragments of it were scattered throughout time. As Ulrich is too old, he sends Wilf back in time to collect the fragments of the amulet. The only help he can give is a pair of wings.

You control Wilf on his search for the amulet.

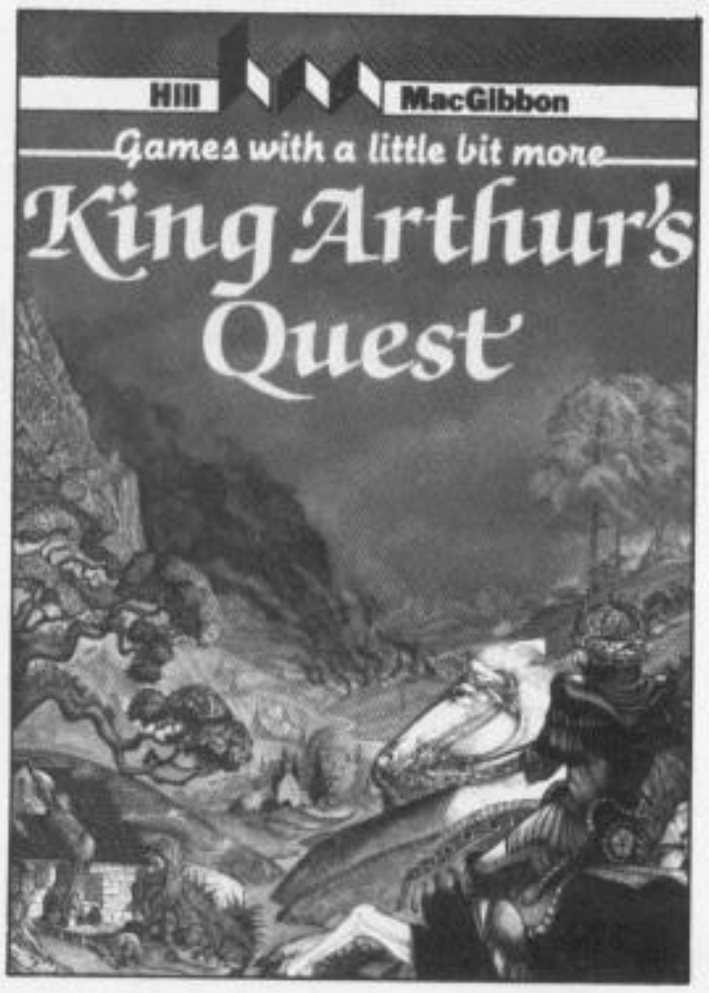
The main part of the screen is taken up by dinosaurs. One touch on them will cost Wilf a life. There are other unhelpful objects such as birds, bats and snakes.

The graphics are very good, especially when Wilf flies. Unfortunately, the screen doesn't scroll but just moves to the next screen.

I found that two parts of the program were saved at twice the usual baud rate. The loading time is shortened to two minutes and fifty seconds, but it can be unreliable. The volume has to be exactly right, or the program won't load.

J TIMPERLEY

Value ★★★ Graphics ★★★
Sound ★ Satsfaction ★★★



KING ARTHUR'S QUEST
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £7.95
Software house: Hill MacGibbon
Author: Five Ways
Type of game: graphic adventure

King Arthur's Quest is set in the dark ages. You control Arthur in his search for Morgana Le Fay's castle. He must defeat her and break the spell she has cast over the land. Although this is an adventure game, it has no text and has an arcade feel to it.

The land is set into eight sections, each containing a 10 x 10 playing grid. The grid is clearly shown in 3D on the screen. On the left is Excalibur, which shows your energy reserve. At the bottom is the text area showing messages and commands. In the centre is the main screen clearly showing what is happening. On the right is the inventory column showing what you are carrying.

Included in the game is a save-game feature. All commands are entered by a single key press, and a keyboard overlay is provided, although it doesn't fit very well.

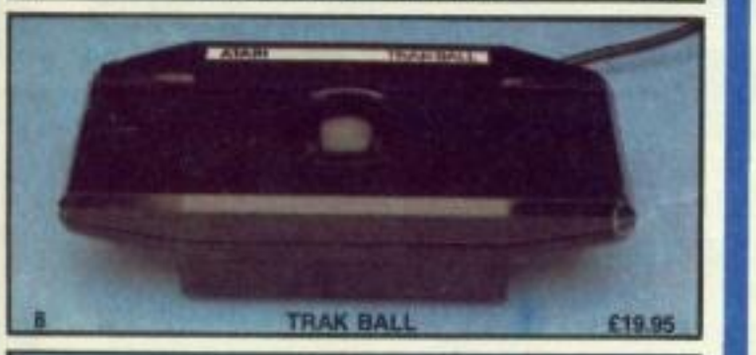
One excellent feature is an option to save the entire program to microdrive automatically. When will other programs have this facility?

In my view, this game is very good, but could be improved by speeding the movement. It has excellent graphics and an original concept. The italic lettering adds a touch of olde English realism to the excellent display.

If you like quest games, this is for you. Even arcade addicts will enjoy it.

PAUL HARDY

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★ Satisfaction ★★★



ATARI XL

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   OPERATING SYSTEM: 24K ROM including Atari Basic programming language and a self diagnostic test program.
   KEYBOARD: Full stroke design with 62 keys including help key and 4 special function keys, international character set and 29 graphics keys.
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   DISPLAY: 11 graphic modes and 5 text modes. Up to 320×192 resolution. Maximum text display 24 lines by 40 columns.
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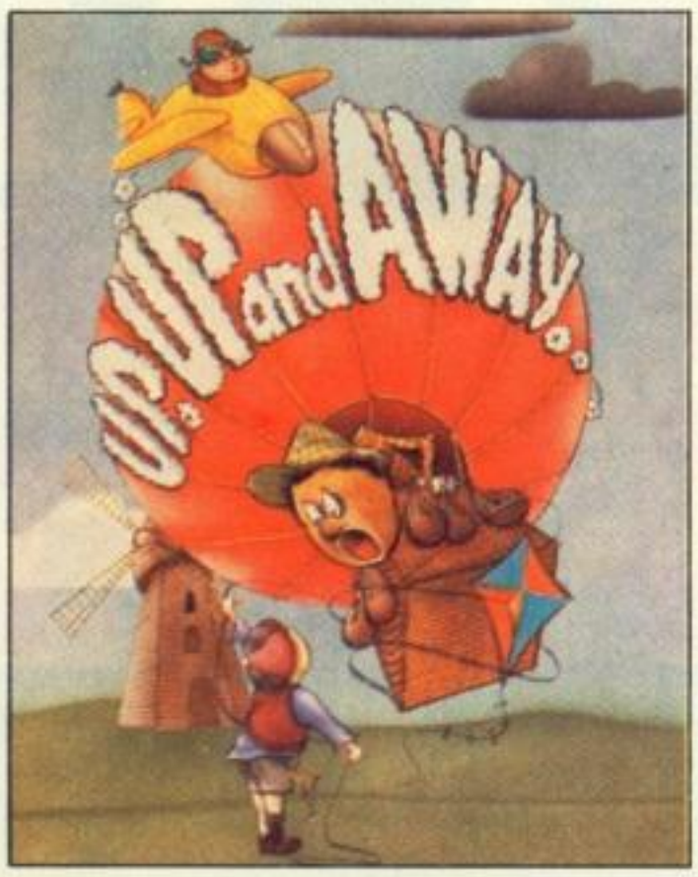


UP UP AND AWAY
Micro: Atari 16K (+ joystick)
Price: £7.95
Software house: Starcade
Type of game: skill

Up Up and Away was the first game to be released by this new software company. The game was written in this country, but it has all the graphics, action and playbility of some of the best US titles.

Your link to the game is a large red hot-air balloon. This you skilfully control while avoiding numerous dangers which are ever-present over every hill and forest.

Control of the balloon is very simple. Pushing the joystick up activates the butane gas burner, making the balloon rise into the air. Pulling it back activates a small valve which releases warm air out of the balloon, making it fall. Move the stick right or left and the balloon will move in the indicated direction.

After the balloon has refuelled, it lifts off. The wind gently blows it across the landscape, which begins to scroll out in front of you. The hills, factories, forests and clouds are beautifully drawn in vivid colours.

The first danger approaches as you rise over the first hill. A small boy stands below throwing stones at your balloon. He tries desperately to pop it, and send you plummeting earthwards. Should you manage to pass overhead, the lad will stamp his foot in anger.

Suddenly, the clouds turn dark. A thunderstorm is brewing and lightning flashes. Each fork gets closer to your flimsy balloon.

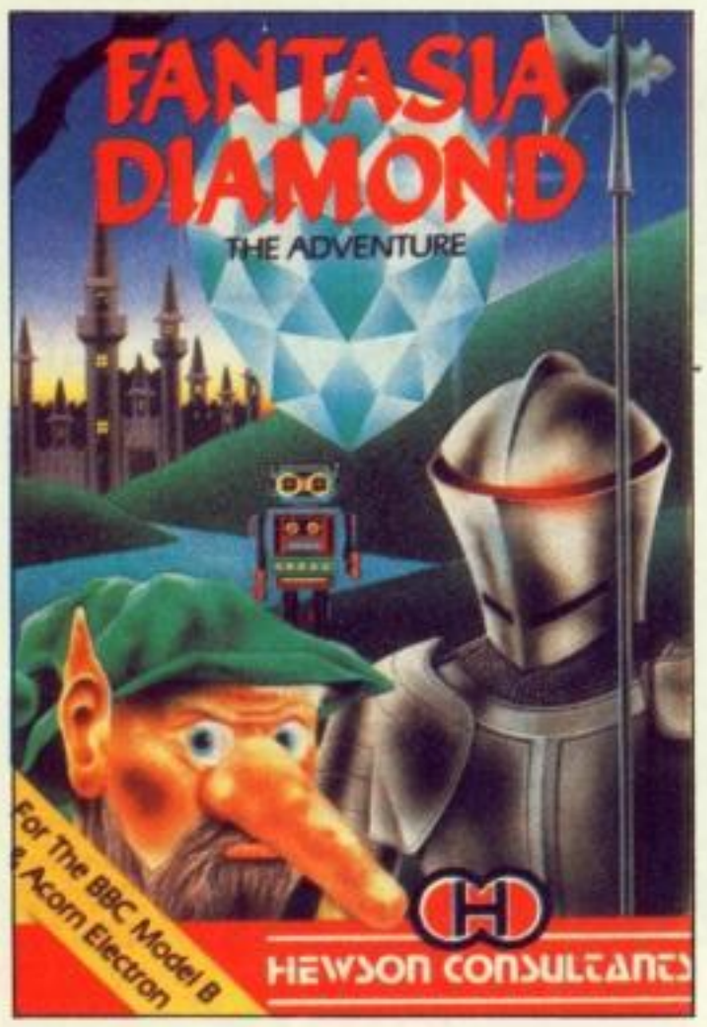
But soon the storm passes. In the distance, you see a windmill, its sails turning in the wind. But they are turning so fast that your balloon is sucked towards the ground. You must quickly turn on the burner, and try to ride above the turbulence.

There is quite a bit more to this game, including flying kites, birds with appalling habits, and planes. There are also sand bags to throw at the enemy for points.

Up Up and Away is an above-average game with colourful graphics, good sound and challenging gameplay. It's certainly a lot more fun than the run of the mill shoot 'em ups.

CAMERON Mc DADE

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★★ Satisfaction ★★★★



FANTASIA DIAMOND
Micro: BBC, Electron, Spectrum
Price: £7.95
Software house: Hewson Consultants
Author: Kim Topley
Type of game: text adventure

Fantasia Diamond is the story of your attempts to recover from thieves your family heirloom, the world's largest diamond – the Fantasia diamond. You've called in Boris the master spy, who tracked the thieves to their fortress. But then he, too, was captured. Now it's up to you – of course.

I played the BBC version of *Fantasia Diamond*. It has a simple split screen to show commands and then effects, if any. Descriptions are not very imaginative. "You see a toy robot" or "a yellow path curves north. A dirt track joins from the east" are typical examples. This is a pity. Liberal descriptions give you more choice to be wrong, and can be filled with plenty of red herrings – it all adds to a good adventure.

An annoying feature occurs when you ponder for a few moments, as you are likely to do in most adventure games. "You do nothing" appears on-screen. After a few times, the whole screen is filled, making any previous descriptions now nonexistent. This is very depressing.

Fantasia Diamond is fairly predictable, but has some nice touches. It boasts a 300-word vocabulary but doesn't accept such words as Lift or Give. Its "independent characters" are very independent, which is nice to see. No booklet accompanied my game – but I count clues in booklets as cheating.

Overall, *Fantasia Diamond* is worth a second look.

A MCLAUGHLIN

Value ★★ Graphics —
Sound — Satisfaction ★★

SWAG
Micro: BBC
Price: £6.95
Software house: Micro Power
Type of game: collecting/skill

The object of *Swag* is to collect all the money and take it home. Robots chase you all the while, but you have a supply of bullets to shoot with. If you manage to shoot one, it will change colour and chase after your opponent.

Run out of ammunition, and you can buy more by dropping into the bank with the gold you stole from it.

If you hit a police car, it will chase you until you drink a can of beer to refresh yourself.

Sound is limited to a few squeaks and pops, rather like *Space Invaders*.

The graphics are excellent. The police cars resemble everyday ones, and even the robots have turned out well. One of the major disappointments is that there is only one screen! The BBC is capable of much more.

For beginners, it should hold some interest. But experienced gamers should stay away.

EDWARD WOOLF

Value ★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★ Satisfaction ★

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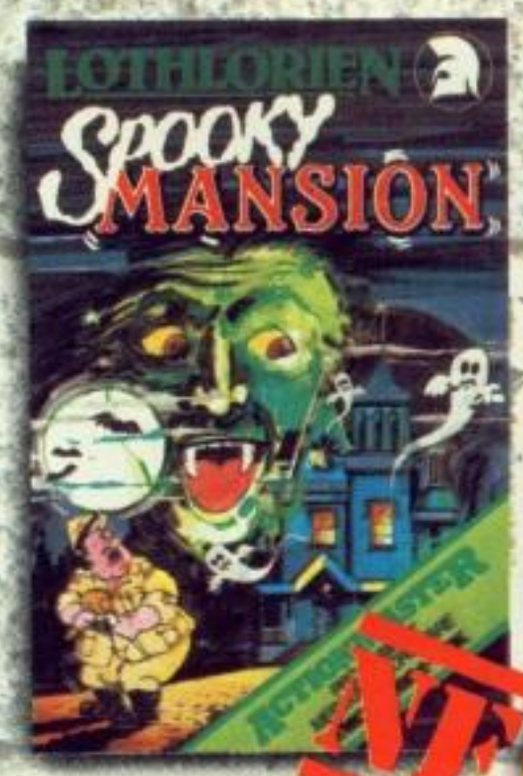

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ATMOS/ORIC 48K £6.95

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ALL OR NOTHING
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £5.50
Software house: Abbex
Author: Perfection Software
Type of game: arcade adventure

This is a bit of a money waster. It also calls for a lot of patience. It's an arcade adventure with 3D graphics and Currah speech.

Don't be impressed with what it sounds like. I admit it has smooth scrolling, and the graphics are quite good. The hero is very small, and you have to strain to see which way he's facing. He's also very hard to control.

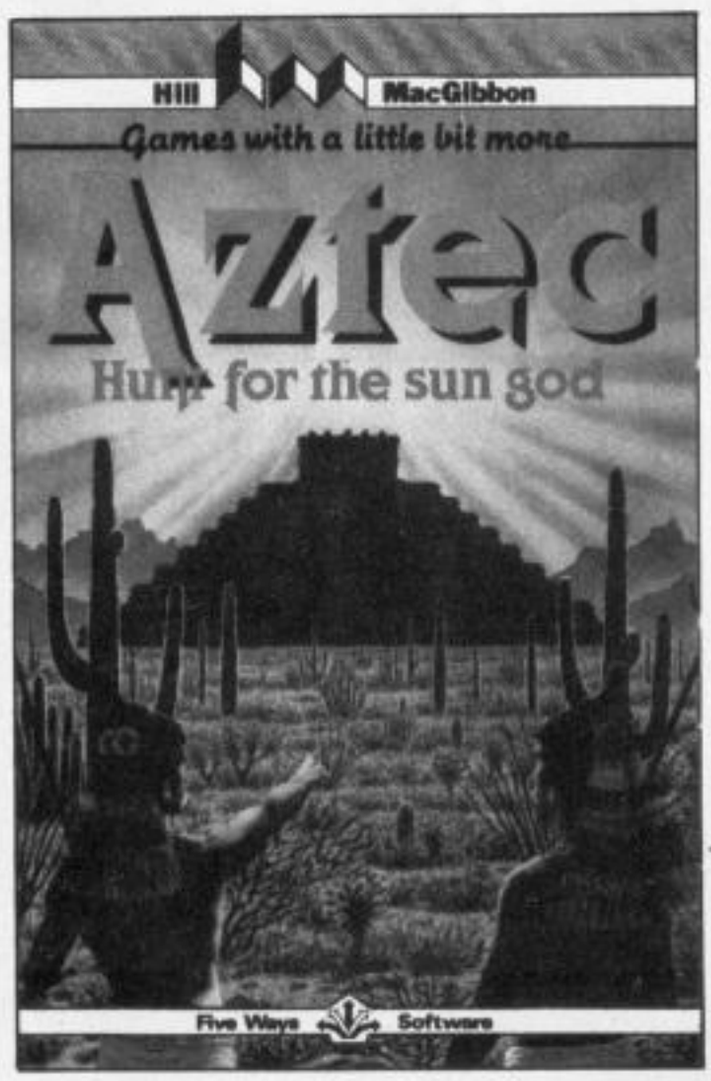
The keys are clockwise, anticlockwise and forward. You can redefine your own keys, which is a godsend.

The idea is to find numerous objects to bribe, blast, bluff, outrun, gas and shoot your way past the so-called deadly guards.

There are so many things to remember that the game becomes boring and dull. I wouldn't recommend it unless you are prepared to sit it out for hours on end.

GARY KEATES

Value ★★ Graphics ★★★
Sound ★ Satisfaction ★



AZTEC: HUNT FOR THE SUN GOD
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £7.95
Software house: Hill MacGibbon
Author: Five Ways
Type of game: graphic adventure

Aztec is not a conventional adventure. It consists of six locations. You must travel from the first one – a deserted village – to the mountain top. There you retrieve the sun from the sun god and free your fellow villagers.

Three locations are loaded on side one of the tape, with the other three on side two. These can be loaded only when you reach a certain point.

Each location is divided into squares, like a grid. You are able to see only two squares ahead.

The game comes with a keyboard overlay with the instructions: turn left/right, move, bring, leave, eat/drink, say spell, what's in this square, cancel. You press the appropriate key instead of typing instructions.

You also get a booklet and a poster cum spell breaker. This is for decoding any parts of spells you may find.

The screen display consists of the view you can see, a space for displaying the objects you have collected, a picture of a god and of the sun. The sun is at the top of the screen, and you must complete the adventure before it reaches the bottom.

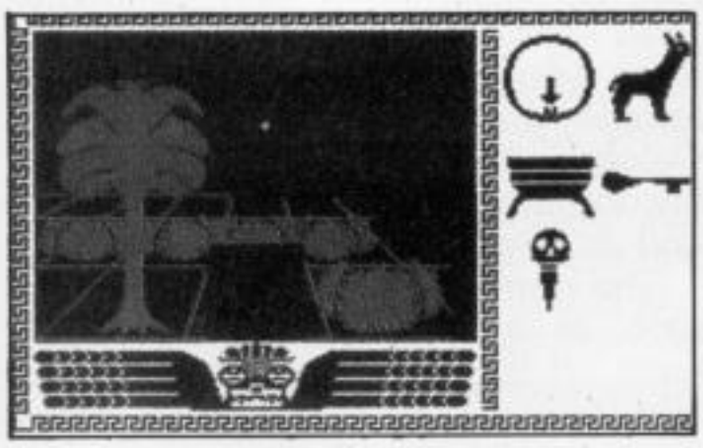
Along the bottom of the screen is the verbal display.

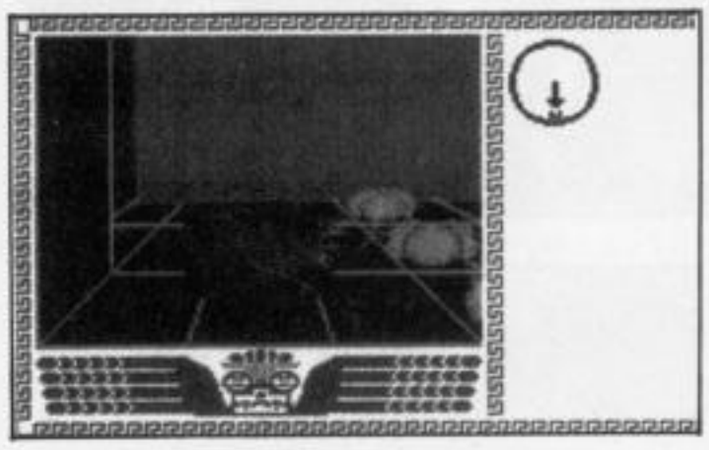
The graphics are very effective, with objects travellling closer aas you move. I liked the occasional burst of lightning, too.

I found it annoying that, when killed, you must load the tape for a further minute before you can restart. The game is fairly expensive, but it's different and should keep you puzzling for quite a while.

DIANA THEODOSIOU

Value ★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★★





WRATH OF MAGRA
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £12.95
Software house: Mastertronic (from Carnell)
Authors: Stuart Gallaway, Roy Carnell
Type of game: adventure

It's finally here: the last of the Third Continent trilogy by Carnell. Without a doubt, it's the best of the lot.

This game is striking from the start, with an extra large case for the two cassettes needed to participate in his adventure. It boasts on the front that the adventure is a massive 120K. This is because it loads in three "episodes", each of which must be finished to get to the following one.

The first episode has twenty-four screens. Each has a graphic window on top and text underneath. The graphics take about ten seconds to be displayed from screen to screen. They can be turned off so you can retrieve that all-important item you left behind several locations back without waiting for each screen to be drawn.

The game has a time limit. You start at twenty-four and continue through the night and the next day. To make time go faster, you have a sleep option.

The second screen also features hires graphics – I haven't managed to go any further.

This is definitely the best adventure game I have played. I'll be up all night.

DAVID MAHER

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound — Satisfaction ★★★★

SPORTS HERO
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £6.95
Software house: Melbourne House
Author: Clive Barrett

Type of game: track and field

You must try to graduate from the slums of Brixton right through to the Olympic team. There are four events in which you must compete: the 100-metre sprint, long jump, 110-metre hurdles and pole vault. These events become more difficult as your dexterity in the sport increases.

In these track and field events, you have two run and jump keys. You must pound away at them as fast as possible to get plenty of speed out of your running figure. The response to this is surprisingly good, even on the Spectrum keyboard. You can get up a fair amount of speed, especially on the 100-metre sprint.

Sports Hero is definitely one of the finest Olympic-oriented games for the Spectrum. The animation is of a particularly high quality. Each time you win an event, your figure raises his hands in triumph. If he loses, he stands shaking his head in misery and tapping his foot.

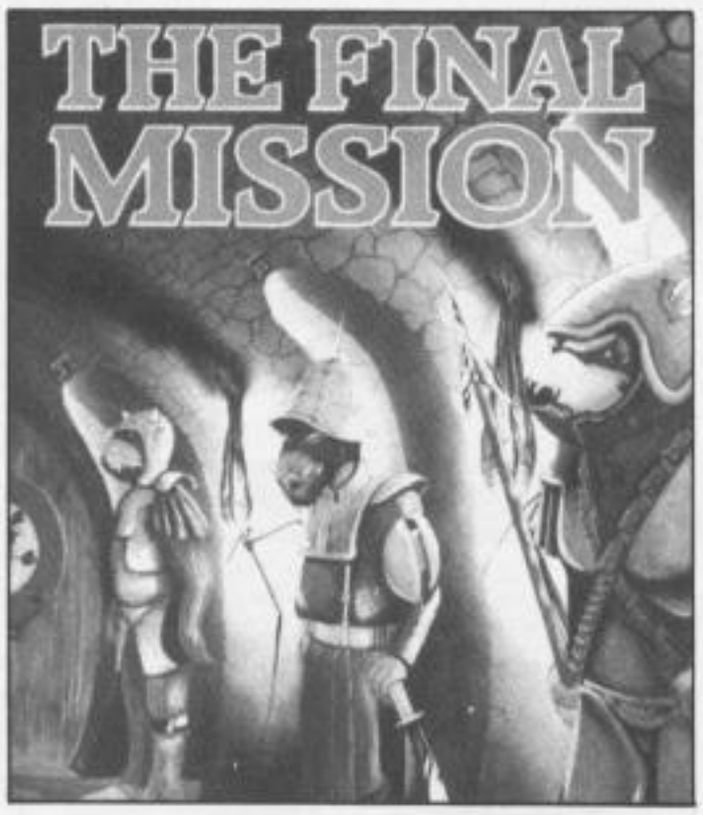
Each time you graduate, a graphical representation of your surroundings is shown onscreen. These are a Brixton housing estate, a university playing field and the Olympic stadium. Each screen scrolls as you run, with such touches as the starter holding a gun. The programmer has turned out a very graphically interesting game.

Sports Hero differs from other games of the same genre in that you must compete against the clock and not a computer-created player. This makes the state of play more interesting, as you try to better your time and maybe beat the world record.

I have no real complaints about this game. A few more events would not have gone amisss, but I can highly recommend it.

DAVID BLAIR

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★ Satisfaction ★★★★



THE FINAL MISSION
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £5.50
Software house: Incentive

Author: RA McCormack
Type of game: text adventure

Before launching into a description of my efforts on this particular game, it would be a good idea to give a brief rundown of the story so far.

You, the nameless explorer, have been sent on a do-or-die mission. You must enter the temple of the mad monks and kill their leader, Vran, and the high priestess, Delphia.

The story has been split into three separate games: *The Mountains Of Ket*, *The Temple Of Vran* and *The Final Mission*. In the previous adventures, you managed to enter Vran's temple and succeeded in killing Delphia. Then you were knocked unconscious. You awake stunned. . . and so begins *The Final Mission*.

The game has some nice touches such as a BEEP command which turns off the keyboard beeper. But considering the Spectrum 'dead flesh' keyboard, this is perhaps not such a good idea. There are also other special commands such as Look, Inventory and Help – which ardent adventurers will recognise. There is also a Statistics command, not much use unless you get into a fight – something to be avoided.

Directions are limited to the four main points of the compass, plus up and down. There are also save and quit options.

I must admit to being somewhat hopeless at text adventures as I have neither the patience nor the cunning mind necessary. I scored only 40%, so perhaps I am not the best person to judge this game – but I was addicted. It is quite simply the best text adventure I have played. Now if only I can get past the green slime. . .

NEIL MACKENZIE

Value ★★★ Graphics —
Sound — Satisfaction ★★★

THE FALL OF ROME
Micro: Atari, BBC, Electron, Commodore 64, Dragon, Oric, Spectrum 16K+48K, Vic 20
Price: £6.99
Software house: ASP
Author: Martin Edwards
Type of game: strategy

I reviewed the Spectrum version of this game, and expected a lot. After all, the CBM 64 version was excellent. But this falls way below those high standards.

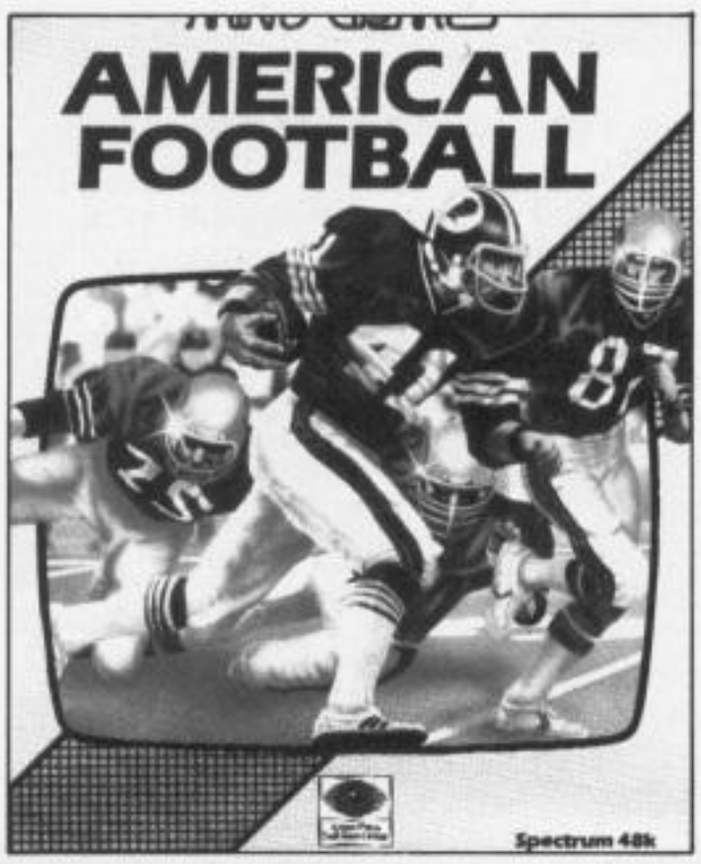
The story-line concerns the Roman Empire, which ruled every shore of the Mediterranean in 395AD. Sixty years later, it was sacked. You are to rewrite history, taking command of Rome in its struggle for survival.

The Fall Of Rome is a game I wouldn't buy.

Stay well clear of this one – unless you find the temptation of a free colour map of the Mediterranean sea too great!

GARY BUSS

Value ★ Graphics ★★★
Sound ★ Satisfaction ★



AMERICAN FOOTBALL
Micro: Amstrad CPC464, Commodore 64, Spectrum
Price: £9.99
Software house: Argus Press
Type of game: strategy

The first thing I noticed about this game was the packaging. It comes in a plastic box the size of a video cassette. With the game is an extensive booklet which contains an introduction to the rules of American football, a large glossary of jargon, and a section on how to play the game.

When the program loads, there is a choice of brief instructions or to play. You can play the computer or another person. Enter the names, and the computer flicks a coin. The winner is attacking straight away.

The screen is divided into two. The top half is the pitch. The bottom half shows the statistics of the game: the present quarter and 'down', the time left in this quarter, team names and scores, yards left to get four more downs, and the position of the ball on the pitch.

There are eleven men in each team, coloured blue and red. These move into a variety of starting positions with each attack, then move together to show game action. While playing, the ball carrier flashes.

Game time is sixty minutes, split into quarters. When attacking, a team has four downs – attacks – in which it must gain ten yards to get another four downs. The object is to reach the rival team's zone, scoring a touchdown, or to score a field goal. The winner is the player with most points at the end of four quarters.

While playing, there is a choice of eleven offensive plays and four defensive plays. There is also a choice of seeing statistics or taking a time out.

The graphics on the pitch are smooth, and the legs move as they run. But they are only character-square size. Sound is not well used, but that doesn't affect the game much.

American Football is a strategy/simulation of the real game, the box states. But I found it was more a case of luck to pick the right attack or defence, and even then the results seemed to be random. Because of the lack of playability, the game soon became boring. In spite of the good packaging, I doubt if this game will sell well.

ANTHONY ACKROYD

Value ★★ Graphics ★★
Sound ★ Satisfaction ★

PLANETFALL
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £6.99
Software house: Argus Press
Author: Timothy Garden
Type of game: economic strategy

There are two major points about this game. First, it's not for those who exclusively like shoot 'em up, blast everything in the galaxy games. Neither is it appropriate for those who like adventure in its purest form.

It's a mean life for you in this game, as you try to develop the galaxy and nasty people are out to prevent you. Since the wars of the intercession ended, you've become redundant. There's no use for a fighter ace with nothing to fight. So you take up trading in the new, expanding universe, vying for the highest profits. There are twelve star systems, and up to twelve players. It's disappointing that you can't play the computer.

The game is in Basic, but I don't think it makes a significant difference to its performance. Surprisingly, I found it quite exciting for an hour. But the novelty soon wore off.

If you're deeply into space economics and trading computers and iron ore to little green men, buy it. If not, don't.

MATTHEW JARVIS

Value ★★ Graphics ★
Sound — Satisfaction ★★

BRICKS
Micro: Vic 20 (+ joystick)
Price: £5.95
Software house: Palace
Author: Ian Sutherland
Type of game: skill

This game seemed impossible to conquer at first. But, with perseverance you can do it.

The idea of the game is that you control a man trapped in a pit who has to get to the top of a pile of bricks.

As the bricks drop down the screen, you can jump from each once it has landed. You can also push a brick horizontally if there are no others in the way.

Once you have reached the top of the screen, you progress to the next level. There are six in all, with the pit walls closing in more each level so that you have less room to move.

At level three and above, the stack of bricks begins to sink, causing more difficulty.

The keys used are E to end game, R to pause game, T to resume play, and Return to start a new game. All other control is with a joystick.

JASON HABGOOD

Value ★★★ Graphics ★★★
Sound ★★ Satisfaction ★★★

BATTLEZONE
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £6.95

Software house: Quicksilva
Author: Bill Witts
Type of game: arcade/war

This is the official Atari-approved version of the popular arcade game. It looks almost identical to the original.

The bottom three-quarters of the screen represents the view from your tank, with the cross hair of your weapon in the centre. The top quarter acts as an information window. It tells whether the enemy is in range, and shows a radar screen pinpointing the enemy.

The idea of the game is to successfully seek and destroy enemy tanks before they destroy you. Points are awarded for each hit, and you can get a bonus by shooting a revolving UFO.

From time to time, guided missiles will be fired at your tank. These are difficult to hit, and can result in the loss of one of your three lives.

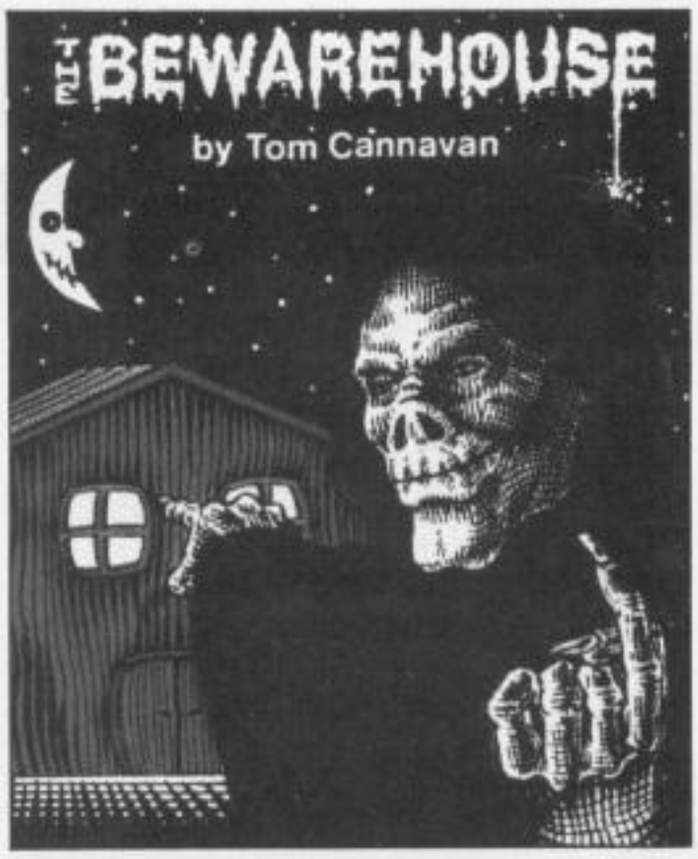
Battlezone features the same superfast line drawings that the arcade version incorporates. Mountains and volcanoes lie in the distance, and obstacles such as pyramids are scattered about – these can be used for cover.

You can move forwards, backwards, left and right, all to the sound of your tank chugging away.

This is the best version of the arcade game that I've seen. The graphics are good – I particularly like the tank explosions. The sound is fair. Keyboard controls are well set out, and should present no problems.

P SERBERT

Value ★★★★ Grapics ★★★★
Sound ★★ Gameplay ★★★★



THE BEWAREHOUSE
Micro: Spectrum
Price: £5.95
Software house: Positive Image
Author: Tom Cannavan
Type of game: climbing

Bewarehouse is a cross between *Hunchback* and *Donkey Kong*. The aim is to run through the warehouse, climbing ladders to reach higher floors. As you pass through more floors, higher skill is needed.

You guide a man who is trapped in the warehouse. Unfortunately, the warehouse is haunted. And the ghosts don't seem to like you, so they bombard you with boxes and barrels.

Luckily, there is some low red piping which you can jump up to, so that the barrels roll under you. There is also some higher blue piping which can be reached with a super jump. These blue pipes are the only way to avoid the chasing ghosts.

Once to the left of the screen, you must climb up a ladder to reach an upper level.

At the top of the screen is a decreasing bar to show your remaining energy. Jumping uses up a lot of energy, and super jumping even more.

The graphics are bright and clear, but boring as there is no variation on each level. The sound is quite good. Overall, it's not worth buying unless you're desperate for a *Hunchback*-type game.

J TIMPERLEY

Value ★ Graphics ★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★

MEGA VAULT
Micro: Vic 20
Price: £5.50
Software house: Beau Jolly (from Imagine)
Type of game: maze

The aim of *Mega Vault* is to pass all the deadly obstacles in a maze, collect the key from the centre, and return to the start. There a large monster named Fred is waiting for it to take you to the next level.

The obstacles consist of huge sliding blocks, bouncing stars and laser beams. The locks and stars are avoided by nipping into small alcoves and waiting until they pass.

There is food in most of the alcoves, and you must eat this to keep up your energy. If it runs out, you lose a life.

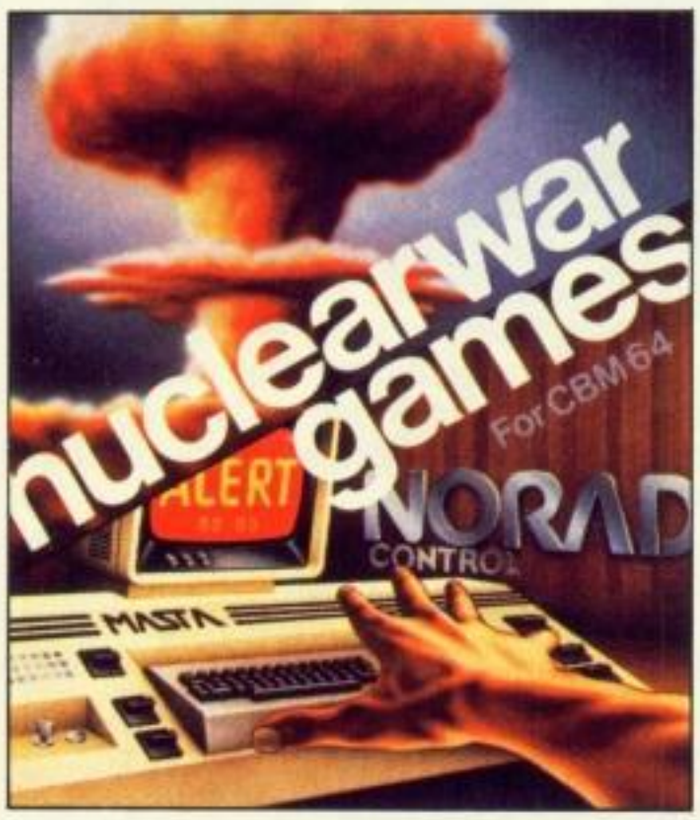
Laser beams flash on and off consistently. You must wait for them to vanish – then run through before they reappear.

I enjoyed discovering the route to the key, and finding out how to avoid the obstacles. But I was very disappointed to see only two different screens, getting harder as you progress. The movement of your character is a little precarious, and the game gets tedious once you have passed the first two screens.

The graphics are good for the Vic, and the tune played throughout the game pleasant. I would recommend the game only if there were more screens.

JEREMY WELLARD

Value ★ Graphics ★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★



NUCLEAR WAR GAMES
Micro: Commodore 64
Price: £8.50
Software house: Severn Software
Type of game: graphic adventure

Those of you who know Severn's *Mystery Of Munroe Manor* will be well aware of the high standard of this company's adventure games. For my money, a graphic adventure is much better than a text-only game. That's probably the reason I enjoyed this puzzler so much.

In *Nuclear War Games*, you must make your way through tough security to reach the central military computer, called MASTA. If you manage to get this far, you must enter a code to stop it starting the war to end all wars.

The task is made more difficult by a running countdown to armageddon, and the fact that nobody you meet is willing to help you. The plot will be familiar to anyone who saw the film *War Games*.

The introduction is enjoyable and original. The game features nice graphics, tricky puzzles and a sense of humour.

My only quibble is that word entry is restricted to one noun and one verb. That apart, this adventure will keep most keen adventurers happy for hours. . . or days. Yawn. . .

SEAN MADDALENA

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★★

SEE-SAW
Micro: Commodore 64
Price: £7.95
Software house: Quicksilva
Author: Andromeda
Type of game: skill

Your task in *See-saw* is to vault the evil castle lord's wall and free the imprisoned members of the brotherhood.

Your task is not easy, as you must manoeuvre yourself along a see-saw at the foot of the castle, avoiding falling masonry as the castle lord tears down the wall in his rage. When a block of masonry hits the elevated side of the see-saw, anything – you included – is hurled up towards him.

But you can't let yourself be propelled up before you knock a hole in the ranks of little green creatures staring at you from inside the castle. These creatures will jump out and catch anything that flies past them.

The sound is poor and irritating, apart from the sound effects when the blocks of masonry crash to the ground. In spite of this, the gameplay is fairly addictive and frustrating.

STEVEN BICKMORE

Value ★★ Graphics ★★
Sound ★★ Satisfaction ★★

SORCERY
Micro: Commodore 64, ZX-81
Price: £7.95
Software house: Virgin
Authors: ZX-81 version by Martin Wheeler, CMB 64 conversion by the "gang of five"
Type of game: collecting/skill

Sorcery has the flashload rapid-load system, and loaded first time I tried in on my CBM 64.

The game is in true hi-res graphics, and has good use of sound. It has seventeen screens, and is a cross between *House Of Usher* and *Arabian Nights*.

Your quest is to get to Stonehenge and place the correct object on the alter. In this way, you free the world of curses.

You control a sorcerer, and must get him from screen to screen through the doors of darkness. On your travels you will find objects such as a sword or spells. Pick them up as you will need them to open doors or kill demons.

Picking up objects also sets up a sequence of events. These change according to what you pick up.

Once you pick up an object, you can't drop it – but you can exchange it by placing yourself over another object and pressing the fire button. To use an object, you also press the fire button.

Control is by joystick for up, left and right. The sorcerer moves down on his own.

You are chased by ghosts and demons constantly, and you lose energy on some screens. You have only one life, and there is a time limit as Stonehenge crumbles on the right side of the screen.

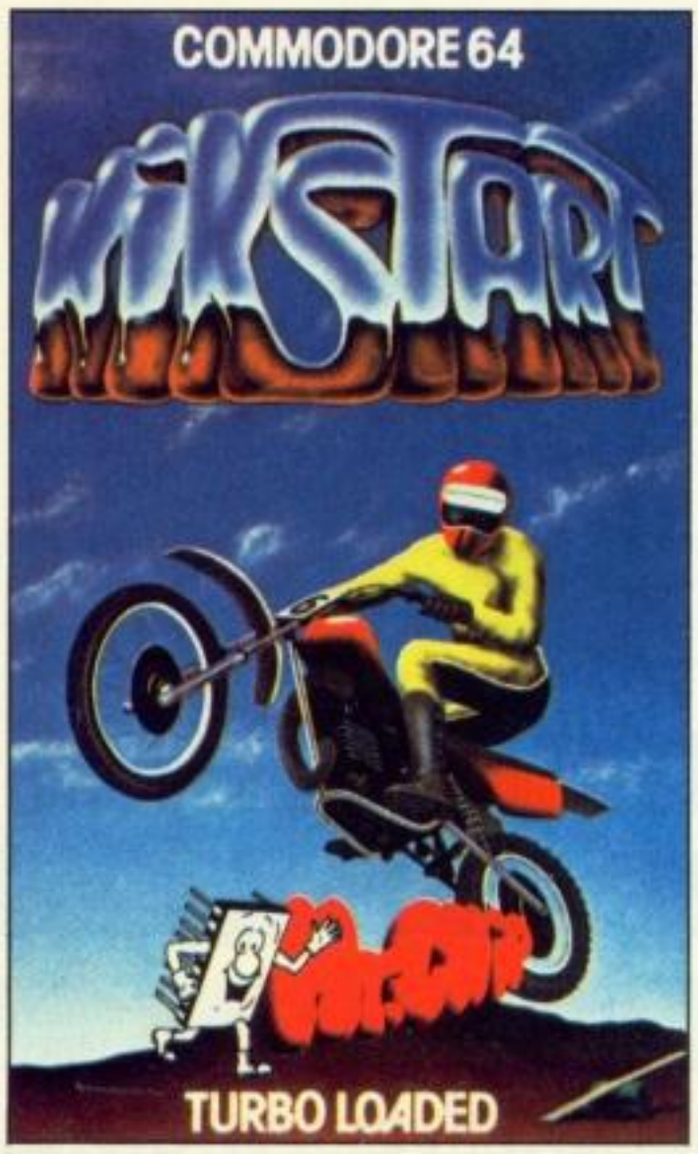
You can get information on your energy level, inventory and location. "You are in the woods, empty handed, energy 86%" is a typical example.

I have played this game every night since I received it, and find it very challenging.

STEVEN ROBERTS

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★★★

REVIEWS ✪ REVIEWS ✪ REVIEWS



KIK START
Micro: Commodore 64
Price: £7.50
Software house: Mr Chip
Type of game: biking

Based on the TV series of the same name, *Kik Start* demands the same skill and feel for a bike.

Two separately scrolling windows allow you to race against another player – but, unfortunately, not against the machine.

Time penalties are incurred when a bike and rider part company. This happens to be a regular occurrence.

Different courses may be chosen before each game commences. Each course contains the same main obstacles: tyres, fences, cars, bumpy ground and hills. These appear in varying sequences.

All in all, *Kik Start* is a very good game. But it needs two players to appreciate it to the full.

JP THOMPSON

Value ★★★★ Graphics ★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★★★

CASSETTE 50
Micro: Commodore 64
Price: £9.95
Software house: Cascade
Type of game: compilation

What can I say? Fifty games for ten quid means twenty pence a game!

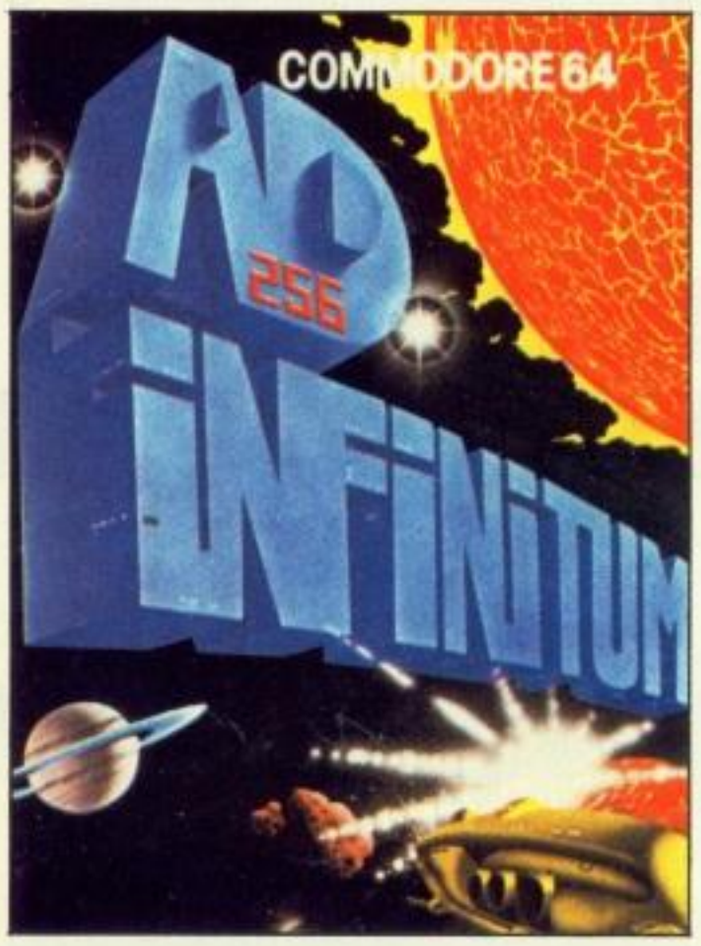
The average quality is comparable to magazine listings. But when you consider the time that it takes to type in a game, the price is more than worth it.

The cassette contains all types of games, including maze, arcade, missile, tactical, logic, adventure and educational. There's something to suit all tastes. Some are better than others, of course.

It took six hours to review this compendium, and I enjoyed every minute of it. So if you're unsure of what to buy next, give your typing fingers a rest and spend a quiet fortnight playing *Cassette 50*.

SEAN MADDALENA

Value ★★★★★ Graphics★
Sound★ Satisfaction★



AD INFINITUM
Micro: Commodore 64
Price: £7.50
Software house: Mr Chip
Type of game: space shoot 'em up

This game is a glorified version of *Space Invaders* with 256 levels. In each level, you ward off aliens – which come in different forms and formations every time – or dock with the mother ship or dodge asteroids and hit fireballs. In the latter two levels, fuel can be gained.

When playing the game, watch the fuel tank. If empty, you are forced to self-destruct. But when the fuel level is getting low, you do score more points for any aliens you hit.

Another thing to watch is the laser. If this overheats through overuse, you also self-destruct.

To start, you have only six lives. But once your last life is lost, you can continue the game from where you left off with a new set of lives.

The graphics and sound in this game are average. So, too, is the *Star Wars* theme music which uses only one of the four voices available on the CBM 64. There is a long pause after you lose a life. This does give you time to compose yourself, but it can be frustrating.

There is a high-score table and a pause facility. The game is turbo loading and quite addictive, if only because the player is curious to see what is coming next. As the name suggests, there is a procession of assorted alien craft which seems to be never ending.

NICHOLAS LORD

Value ★★ Graphics ★★★
Sound ★★★ Satisfaction ★★

THE MAGIC MICRO MISSION
Micro: Commodore 64
Price: £7.95
Software house: Quicksilva
Author: Simon Goodwin
Type of game: maze/shoot 'em up

I'm sorry to say that Quicksilva's latest offering is far from magic.

The game consists of two stages or screens. In the first screen, you must travel along a 3D landscape, blowing up a group of very unconvincing robot ships. Once you have completed six waves, you can progress to the next screen.

Here, you control a brown robot named Zog around a simple maze. You must capture small white blurs that are supposed to represent faulty ROM chips. You must also avoid black squiggles supposed to represent RAM chips and deadly resistors.

Get past this stage, and it's back to screen one. It may sound harsh, but I found this game terrible.

GARY ANDERSON

Value ★★ Graphics ★★
Sound ★ Satisfaction ★

As monitored by Virgin Games

TOP 20 video and computer games

POSITION	NAME	MANUFACTURER	SYSTEMS
1	GHOSTBUSTERS	(Activision)	a, c, h, j
2	RAID OVER MOSCOW	(Access/US Gold)	c, f, j
3	TIR NA NOG	(Gargoyle Games)	j
4	UNDERWURLDE	(Ultimate)	j
5	PYJAMARAMA	(Microgen)	j
6	KNIGHT LORE	(Ultimate)	j
7	ELITE	(Acornsoft)	b, e
8	AMERICAN FOOTBALL	(Argus Press)	j
9	COMBAT LYNX	(Durrel)	a, c, j, k
10	STRANGELOOP	(Virgin)	c, j
11	NATO COMMANDER	(Microprose/US Gold)	c, f
12	TASWORD II	(Tasman)	j
13	PSI-WARRIOR	(Beyond)	c
14	ZAXXON	(Synsoft/US Gold)	c, f, j, n
15	BACKPACKERS GUIDE	(Fantasy)	j
16	GRAND PRIX	(Amsoft)	k
17	BLACKHAWK	(Creative Sparks)	c
18	PSYTRON	(Beyond)	j
19	ENGLISH CIVIL WAR	(Red Shift)	
20	T.L.L.	(Vortex)	

a Acorn BBC computer b CBS Colecovision/Adam c Commodore 64 d Dragon e Acorn Electron f Atari 800 XL g Intellivision h MSX j Spectrum k Amstrad CPC 462 n Atari 2600 VCS

...and the TOP 10 arcade games

1 STAR WARS	(Atari)	6 BUCK ROGERS	(Sega)
2 TRACK & FIELD	(Konamito)	7 MR DO	(Universal)
3 DRAGON'S LAIR	(Cinematronics)	8 ASTRON BELT	(Sega)
4 POLE POSITION	(Atari/Namco)	9 TURBO	(Sega)
5 MACH 3	(Mylstar)	10 FIREFOX	(Atari)

TOP ARCADE GAMES OF THE MONTH

You are invited to vote for your favourite screen game and your favourite arcade game. But remember to vote only for those games that you own, have rented or have played a great deal.

To register your vote, use the reply page in this issue. One lucky voter will receive a free year's subscription to TV Gamer (decided by draw.)

JOIN THIS MONTH'S TOP 20 PANEL

Tell us about yourself

Your age: If under 18, please be exact .....

18-24 ( ) 25-34 ( ) 35 and over ( )

Do you read any other games or computer magazines? If so, which ones:

.....

.....

Do you expect to buy a home computer in the next year? (please tick one)

yes ☐ perhaps ☐ no ☐

What computer(s)/games system(s) do you have?

.....

And when did you get them? .....

What's your favourite home screen game?

TITLE .....

WHAT DO YOU PLAY IT ON? ..... WHAT'S YOUR HIGHEST SCORE? .....

What's your favourite arcade or pub game?

TITLE .....

WHAT'S YOUR HIGHEST SCORE? .....

Your name .....

Your address .....

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TOP SCORE

The Top 20 games monitored by *TV Gamer* readers, with the top scores

1	(5)	**DECATHLON** (TVG proven)	**12,221** Richard Dennison
2	(10)	**FULL THROTTLE** (Micromega)	no claim made
3	(3)	**PITFALL II** (TVG proven)	**199,000** Alex Mitchell/M. Churcher
4	(–)	**DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON** (TVG claimed)	**664,540** Scott Rose
5	(2)	**ZAXXON** (TVG claimed)	**3,350,100** Christopher Brady
6	(7)	**SABRE WULF** (TVG claimed)	**98,640** Scott Rose
7	(–)	**MONTY MOLE** (Gremlin Graphics)	no claim made
8	(1)	**JET SET WILLY** (Software Projects)	**83 objects** Ross Coleman/Cameron Else
9	(9)	**POLE POSITION** (TVG claimed)	**721,000** Feargal McConville
10	(4)	**BEACH HEAD** (US Gold)	no claim made
11	(–)	**MICRO OLYMPICS** (Data Base)	no claim made
12	(8)	**PITFALL** (Activision)	**114,000** David Ross/Richard Varnie
13	(16)	**VALHALLA** (TVG claimed)	**Ofnir, Drapnir found** Philip Callow
14	(11)	**RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK** (TVG claimed)	**25 points** Brian Bell
15	(13)	**TRASHMAN** (TVG claimed)	**29,034** Nigel Prior
16	(12)	**DONKEY KONG** (TVG claimed)	**8,796,600** Ian Morrish
17	(–)	**FLIGHT PATH 737** (Anirog)	no claim made
18	(–)	**JACK & THE BEANSTALK** (Thor)	no claim made
19	(14)	**RIVER RAID** (Activision)	**1,000,000** Gavin Davidson
20	(–)	**PSYTRON** (Beyond)	no claim made

TV Gamer invites readers to send in their high scores for any screen game. A ***claimed*** score merely needs to state your name, game title, system (eg Atari home computer system, Spectrum, VCS, etc) and claimed score.

A ***proven*** score will require photographic evidence, but will take precedence over previous claimed scores. We suggest using a SLR auto-exposure camera on a tripod with cable release, timed at 1/4 second. Games which can be "clocked" (ie the score reaches a maximum and then returns to zero) will count only as claimed scores. Additionally, games which present short-cuts to high scoring (eg ***Space Invaders***, which can be made to shoot two missiles at a time) will also only be accepted as claimed scores.

Send your scores to *TV Gamer, Top Score Desk, 187 Oxford Street, London W1.*

Greetings, gamers! Welcome to a Christmas-free club letter. Yes, folks you have finally found the place that isn't ramming cute little robins, reindeer and jolly Santas down your throats during the next few weeks. Personally, I don't see why they don't put Christmas forward a month. That way, you could buy all your presents in the January sales and save lots of money!

Enough of this yuletide drivel. Let's get down to business. This month, we've seen a lot of letters concerning poor old Parker and its sad demise, and we feature a few of them in these pages. Many of you were concerned about what was to become of the unused game copyrights that Parker amassed: *Frogger Three Deep*, *Circus Charlie*, and more. Chances are that Parker will try and cut its losses, and sell them off to rivals. So don't worry about not seeing these games. They'll emerge sooner or later.

What do you think of the articles in the issue? Do you think we have the right balance of features and reviews? Do you like the special features we do, like the one about Planet Photon, or The Making of the Last Starfighter in this ish? Do you find them an interesting break from the in-depths, or do you just find them a pain in the joystick? Let us know what you think; we're always receptive to constructive criticism.

Well, that's all I have space for. So until next issue, Merry C*******s.

Darrin Williamson

NEW GAMES...

Will the following be manufactured for the Atari 800XL: *The Last Starfighter*, *Romancing the Stone*, *Conan the Barbarian* and *Destroyer*? Does Atari intend to make *Firefox* in laser vision?

Lastly, do you know if Parker brothers will release the James Bond 007 game?

Sydney Williamson, Hackney, London

There are no plans as yet for the games you mentioned, although a Conan game did come out briefly in the states for a games system known as the Bally Astrocade. However, the chances are that Atari will launch a Last Starfighter coin-op within the next year or so.

...AND MORE GAMES

Any chance of TVG doing a hardware review of the Acorn Electron? It's becoming a very serious little computer now, and I think more of its games should be reviewed.

Does the laser-disc player, announced by Coleco, work with the Colecovision console without an Adam? When can we expect to see it in the shops?

Can Activision's *Space Shuttle* and Atari's *Pole Position* be played on Colecovision with the Atari adaptor?

On the software side of things, when will *Star Wars* and *Circus* Charlie be available?

I Leader, London NW10

Due to the simularity between the BBC B and the Electron, we didn't really think that is was worth a separate review for both machines especially with more exciting machines emerging such as the Memotech.

The prototype that was shown in America last year only worked with the Colecovision/Adam combination due to the large amounts of RAM required. Unfortunately, we don't even have a provisional launch date for this peripheral over here.

Space Shuttle and Pole Position certainly work with our Atari adaptor, although Activision doesn't make a cardboard overlay to fit so you would have to make sure you know what each button does.

It doesn't look as though Star Wars or Circus Charlie will appear from Parker although Konami does have the MSX right to the game.

WHAT TO BUY?

I'm thinking of buying a computer, and have narrowed my options down to either the Commodore 64 or the Spectrum 48k. Which one is best for playing games on?

Also, which one has the most software houses manufacturing games for it, the most available software, and the best graphics and sound? Do either of them require a special tape-recorder?

Tom Paton, Edinburgh

Both are equally well catered for on the software, although you will find that generally C64 versions of games do tend to have the edge on games for the Speccy (especially soundwise). The Commodore 64 does require a special tape recorder, however.

GO FOR A PAL

Help! I recently sent off for TVG back issues and noticed an article of interest to me. It was in the Summer 1983 issue in the section Getting into Video Gaming. I read that cartridges or games bought in the US will not normally work over here and, at worst, there may be a continual rolling of the picture.

Two years ago, I ordered an Atari VCS *Berzerk* cartridge for £24.95 from Pancom in Grimsby.

Everything was fine at first, with the *Berzerk* cartridge working on both the eleven-year-old colour TV set and the portable black-and-white.

The problem arose when we bought a new teletext colour TV. I connected *Berzerk* to it, but all I got was a continual rolling of the picture. At the time I blamed the new TV, since it still worked on the portable.

But it's not only your article which makes me believe that I was fobbed off with an American import. The box was different in design and colour (green as opposed to red) to its English counterpart. A DC comic book was enclosed in the box and also advertised on the front of it. The instruction manual was, again, different in design to the English one and contained only English instructions.

My other Atari cartridges have their names printed on a label at the top of the cartridge, followed by a small P (for PAL?) whereas *Berzerk* has the name, but no P.

Do you think it was an American import? If so, is there anything at all that I can do about it? I have not seen that Pancom advertisement recently - and I ceased to receive their newsletter about a year ago.

Nicholas Walker,
Wigan, Lancs

Alas, I'm afraid you've been done and there isn't really anything you can do about it at this late stage except maybe contact Atari direct and see if they will (for a small charge) exchange your NTSC version of Berzerk for a PAL version.

£4.99 FOR ATARI GAMES

In the November issue of TVG Club Letters page, you told Michael Green that Atari games carts cost about £10. I thought you might be interested to know that, although I started off paying £12, I paid only £4.99 for my last twenty Atari carts.

I purchase them from a local record shop called Bostocks. They have branches in Bradford, Leeds and Liverpool, and also do Intellivision and Coleco carts for the same price. All you have to do is look around. Have you tried your local Asda Superstore?

GA Battensby,
Bramley, Leeds

We always quote either the recommended retail price (RRP) or the highest price we can find. That way people will know when they are being conned and when they are getting a bargain.

COLECO QUERIES (Pt. 1)

When you listed the games available for the Adam/Coleco in the September issue you listed *Miner 2049er* as being by CBS. But you had previously said it was made by Big 5. Which one is it?

Is *Montesuma's Revenge* available for the Colecovision? Will Parker's *James Bond, Gyruss, Star Wars* and *Frogger Threedeep* be coming out for the Colecovision?

Can you give me the outline of the following games: *Antartic Adventure* (CBS), *Frenzy* (CBS), *Mountain King* (Sunrise Software), *Quest for Quintana Roo* (Sunrise Software), *HERO* (Activision) and *Heist* (Microfun).

At Easter this year, I went to Miami, USA, and played in the arcades at Miami Airport. There, you exchange American dollars for tokens via a talking machine – which even tells jokes! There were many great games, my favourite being *Congo Bongo* and *Satan's Hollow*, together with several laser-disc games.

Bradley Mayhew,
Sevenoaks

Miner 2049er is manufactured by Big Five software on the Atari HCS and Coleco for the Colecovision. Different companies have the rights to the game on different formats. Frenzy should be out soon and Antarctic Adventure will be almost exactly the same as Konami's MSX game of the name. All further releases will be featured as always in future editions of TVG.

COLOCO QUERIES (Pt. 2)

Do you know if there are, or will be, Coleco versions of the following arcade games: *Rock 'n' Rope, Bag Man, Circus Charlie, Mr Do's Castle, Transverse USA, Mappy* and *Tip Top*. I really enjoy playing these games at the arcades.

Is *James Bond* similar to the arcade game, *Spy Hunter*? When will *Mr Turtle* be coming out?

Have you seen the sports game, made by the makers of *Track & Field*, called *Hyper Sports*? It includes swimming, pole vault, clay pigeon shooting, archery, weight-lifting, etc.

Shaun Gallant,
Norwick, Norfolk

Many of the titles Parker were about to release seem to attract a lot of interest. I wonder why it hasn't tried selling them off to someone else?

Hypersports will be available from Konami for MSX very soon.

SPECTRAVISION DEARTH

What software is available for the Spectravision computamate? I rank *TX-1* higher than *Pole Position* and *Turbo*, and wondered if it is likely to be produced for the 2600 VCS.

On the point of new games, what can we expect next for the Atari?

According to my Spectravision catalogue, *Master Builder* was scheduled to come out during Winter 1983 along with *Mangia*, but I've only seen *Mangia*.

Finally, about three months ago I mastered *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Since then, I haven't been able to beat twenty-five adventure points. As this equals the record, is it the maximum score possible?

Matthew Brownhill,
Dunley, Cheshire

No software for the compumate ever emerged in this country. Apparently, a couple of educational titles were released in Japan but that's it. It's unlikely that many people have three colour televisions to put next to each other so it is unlikely that TX-1 will be a home game for a while.

ATARI SHOUT FOR HELP

I was shocked to read, in your October issue, about the position Atari is in. How will this affect gamers who own Atari 2600 and home computers? Will the new management swap the Atari 2600 and stop production? What games will Atari continue to manufacture?

- Changing the subject, how do you beat the third load in the temple of *Survival Island*? I've managed to get through six sections of the mazes.

What use does the lantern have in the game? I've tried many things but haven't found a use for it yet. I would like to know why you haven't reviewed this excellent game by Starpath? Are any new Starpath games on the way?

David Burman,
Lanarkshire, Scotland

Very little real infomation has leaked out of Slough since the takeover so we can't really comment.

The main reason we haven't reviewed Survival Island is that the UK distributors, Silica Shop, haven't bothered to send us a review copy. As far as we know nothing has been released since Survival Island.

MORE ON COLECO

Having heard that Atari plans to release games for the Coleco, could you tell me whether *Joust* or *Pole Position* will be added to the range?

Dean Farmer.
Southampton

Atari seems to have lurched away from every thing remotely connected with video games due to the fact that Tramiel is business software crazy. So the chances of any Coleco compatibles is slim, to say the least.

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All issues contain the latest news, reviews of new games, Readers' letters, High Scores and Competitions.

Note: Issues 1, 2 & 3 were each complete listings of all the games available for Atari VCS, Intellivision, Coleco and Vectrex video games. Many of the reviews were reprinted with amendments from issue to issue. Issue 3, Winter 1983, remains the most comprehensive listing of games for these machines.

Issue 2 (Winter 1983) is now Out of Stock, but photocopies of articles from it may be provided at £1 each.

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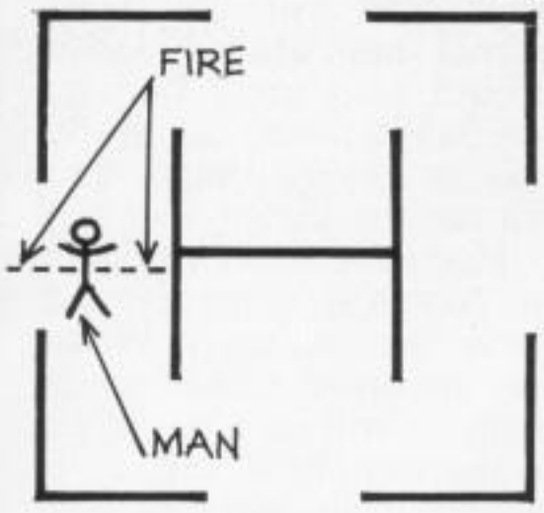
EASTER-EGGS

BERZERK FIRING
The instructions for Atari's *Berzerk* say that, on firing from a side opening, the fire should wrap-around and come out the other side.

When you get a maze like the one below, firing



from the left-hand side bounces off the nearest wall. This can be helpful if a robot is chasing you. But it doesn't happen on the right-hand side.

Ian,
Hornchurch, Essex

VCS EGGS
Once, when I turned on VCS's *Sky Skipper*, I saw a black screen with a plane in the top left corner. I reset the game, and it played normally. But the first maze was white and the second was invisible.

On releasing the joystick, the plane stopped completely.

On normal games, you can sometimes catch four cats in one screen. On even-numbered screens, half the screen goes black and your plane finds itself in a cage if you fly down the middle gap.

Here are a few tips for VCS *Kangaroo*.

Screen one: collect all the fruit.

Screen two: collect all the strawberries, and fruit at the top. Move right, and punch the monkeys until you get a 400 point bonus.

Screen three: collect strawberries. Move to the right-hand tree trunk on the long level third from top. The monkeys think you are on a level below, and act accordingly. As they climb up the trunk, punch them to get 200 points each.

When the game repeats, on the first screen only collect the strawberries and the top fruit.

On the second screen, only collect the strawberries and punch the monkeys as before.

When you climb a ladder, the kangaroo is a little slow in responding when you jump (especially screen two). If you jump straight up before crossing the first gap after a ladder, you can prevent a fall.

Philip Goodwin
Wickford, Essex

JUNGLE HUNT – AGAIN
I read Dave Harvey's article on *Jungle Hunt* with interest, having recently obtained the Atari cartridge. But I was surprised to read about the murk and brick-walls, as I haven't found them on the cartridge.

On my cartridge, Roxanne is safely on the ground – not hanging from ropes above a cauldron.

Apart from these differences, on my version I can go straight from one stage to another. I don't have to dive off any vines.

Finally, congratulations on your In Depth review of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Neal Addison
Horsforth. Leeds

BOMB THE BOMBER
I have found an easter egg in Coleco's *Time Pilot*. Put the game on any skill level, and play the 1910 screen as usual. Then go on to the 1940 screen, and play till there are only two or three enemies remaining (indicated under the date). Wait till there's a blue bomber on the screen, then shoot the remaining enemy planes.

Now crash your time ship into the blue bomber, which will flash red. When the game continues, you will still be on the 1940 screen. But the red bomber will never reappear.

The game will stay on 1940 until all your time ships have been destroyed.

Neil Offiler,
Nottingham

FOUND: MORE INITIALS
On completing level seven of *Fathom*, your game ends, the screen comes up and the following appears:
∃1001 950 ∃I LGCA

Press the fire button on *Cosmic Creeps*, screen one, just before your kid goes into the space station. He will turn into a bullet. The bullet will then be fired automatically at the start of the next screen.

In the sweetheart's screen of *Popeye*, try positioning Popeye so that half of him shows on each side of platform one's screen. Brutus will go to the left, then to the right, continuously until you decide to come down.

When the superbomb alarm went off on the third building in *Spiderman*, I found a silver cross in the middle of it. Then the cross disappeared, and I couldn't defuse the bomb.

Lastly, I have seen Steve Kitchen's name on *Carnival*.

Brandon Bell

EASY PLAY
I have two eggs to tell you about. The first one is on *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Select your gun and fire a bullet. Then quickly select your grenade, and press your red button before the bullet has left the screen. The grenade should fire across the screen in the same direction as the bullet.

The other egg is on *Space Invaders*. Turn your Atari VCS on, with the cartridge in it, while your game reset switch is down. This will make playing the game easier, with more than one bullet to fire.

Mark Buckingham
Corby, Northants

ATARI EGGS. .
A number of games for my Atari 600XL have bugs on them.

When you clear a screen on *Popeye*, press the punch button. Sometimes Popeye will elongate. On some occasions, I have seen weird lines floating down the screen in place of the usual tokens.

As you qualify or complete a race in *Pole Position*, crash into any oncoming car. A flash of flames will momentarily appear, and suddenly change back into a normal racing car.

In *Donkey Kong*, jump up and down on lift one until you reach the girder. Then jump off, to be rewarded with 100 points for no apparent reason.

Once, when I paused during the game, I accidently knocked the joystick. The top of the screen remained normal, but in the bottom left-hand corner a second Kong appeared. In the bottom right, there was a second girl. My score was in the centre.

In *Donkey Kong Jr*, press start when Kong kicks Mario off the screen in the attack scene. It will start the new game with no Mario, snapjaws, fruits or chuncky vines.

I have seen weird squares in *Zaxxon* which cannot be destroyed sometimes appear in space.

In *Slinky*, quite often you will find yourself on the corner of cubes. Even though you can move, you won't be able to colour the cubes in.

C Inett.
Warley, W Midlands

. . .AND MORE
I bought *Pole Position* for

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EASTER-EGGS

my Atari VCS a few months ago, and can reach the score of 59,710 quite easily. But when I reach this score, the checked flags on the score begin to flash for extended play.

The time left shows only three seconds to go. But the game ends instead, and the three seconds left count down with the bonus points.

218"32 starts to flash when the game finishes at 596,710. Is this score the furthest the game is able to go?

Stephen Furniss,
Sheffield 7

TAKE A LIFT

I think I have found an egg on the *Donkey Kong* arcade game. I noticed some other gamers run and jump straight onto the lift in the third screen. So I thought I'd try it. I found myself standing on the bit where the lifts come out. Then I jumped and landed on an ascending lift. Am I the first to report this?

Darren Foster,
Crookes, Sheffield

PS Could you print a giant poster of the *Zaxxon* picture from your October issue, page 41?

SUSSING DONKEY KONG

On the second screen of *Donkey Kong*, choose any ladder and move Mario onto it. Then move him up and down gently, touching the girder each time. After a few attempts you will find that Mario's legs move into the girder.

When in this position, you can run over the yellow blocks without removing them. Even if the block is removed, it is possible to walk across the gap. You may have to press the jump button to free yourself.

From this same position, it is possible to achieve quite a few things. On the third girder up in the second screen, align Mario vertically with a ladder on the bottom level. Push the joystick up. You will appear on the bottom level ladder.

On the third level of screen two, you can walk off either side of the girder into the black area.

Using the same method on the elevators, you can transport yourself from one ladder to another. But I'll leave you to find out which ladder. Oh – be careful you don't fall!

Carry out the same method on the first unbroken ladder of the first screen. All the barrels will fall off the girders until your feet are back on the level.

S Billingham,
Leamington Spa,
Warwickshire

VECTREX REVISITED

There's an egg on *Minestorm* for the Vectrex. When you start a game, you can fly through the first three mines as they appear without getting destroyed.

Mark Stuart,
Beauly, Invernesshire

DRIVE TO VICTORY

Having completed a lap in *Pole Position*, you are given a time in which to complete the next one. If you are quick enough, the time increases. On reaching a number higher than ninety-nine, it will only show two seconds.

I gained *Pole Position* in the qualifying lap within the ninety-nine seconds left.

Peter Barrett,
Maidstone, Kent

EGGS SUNNY-SIDE UP

Here are a few eggs from down-under.

Press some buttons during *Armour Battle* and your tank will disappear.

While playing *Basketball*, my brother blocked one of my jumpshots. I quickly pressed my block button and he froze in mid-air.

In *Triple Action*, select the tank game and put two tanks side by side. Move one of them around, and it should float away through the walls. Don't forget to use the move button and not just the disc.

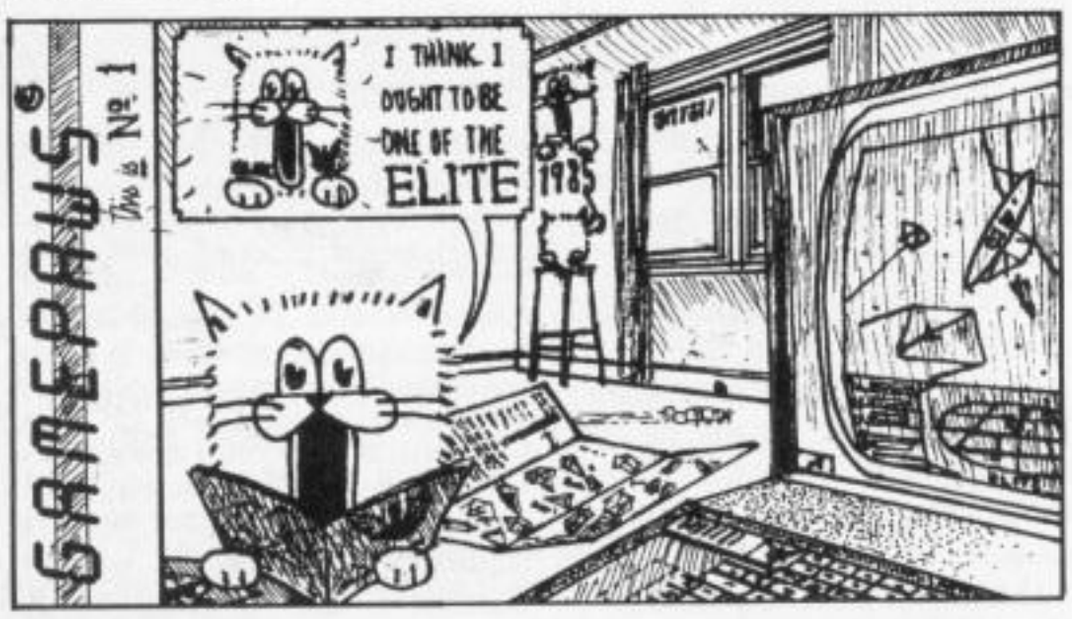
Move the receiving man in *Tennis* up to the net and serve the ball softly. When the receiver hits it back softly, it will go straight up to the top of the screen. It returns in the server's bottom corner.

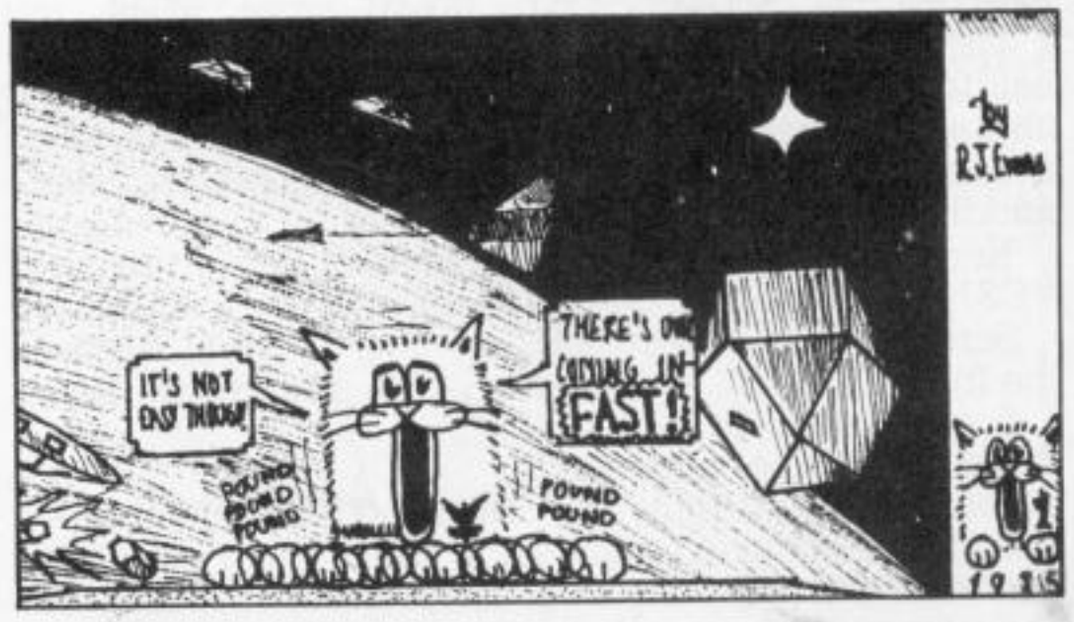
And I've found some eggs in *Pitfall* which are like trampoline walls. Jump onto a vine and then back off. When the Tarzan yell starts, you won't be on it. I discovered an invisible vine once, but haven't been able to find it again (not funny!).

I'm keeping the egg in *Burgertime* to myself – but look out for flying pickles!

Chris Kypriotis,
Churchill, Australia

And a message from C Brayshaw of Waltham Abbey, Essex, about Dave Hampton's egg in the October issue. The letters AT he found in Survival Island actually say PIT – he's fallen in and lost life points!





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